

Brigade

OUR COMMUNITY • OUR CFA



cfa.vic.gov.au



**Ash Wednesday
remembered**



**First
turnout
for sisters**



**Science and
innovation at
CFA**

Brigade magazine is published by CFA Communications & Stakeholder Relations, PO Box 701, Mt Waverley Vic

Manager Member Communication and Engagement:

Brad Thomas

Editor: Duncan Russell
duncan.russell@cfa.vic.gov.au
03 9262 8978

Graphic designer:
Mark Hammond

Printer:
IVE Group

Articles reflect the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of CFA.

The editor reserves the right to edit articles.

You can update your address or email details, or cancel Brigade magazine, by clicking on 'view my profile' on the home page of members.cfa.vic.gov.au or by calling 1800 628 844.

CFA encourages the dissemination and re-use of information in this publication. The State of Victoria owns the copyright of all material produced by CFA.

All material in this publication is provided under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 international licence with the exception of any images, photographs or branding, including CFA and government logos. In some cases a third party may hold copyright in material in this publication and their permission may be required to use the material. See creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0.

Material obtained from this publication is to be attributed as: © State of Victoria (Country Fire Authority) 2023



Useful resources

Brigade cfa.vic.gov.au/brigademag

news.cfa.vic.gov.au

facebook.com/cfachiefofficer

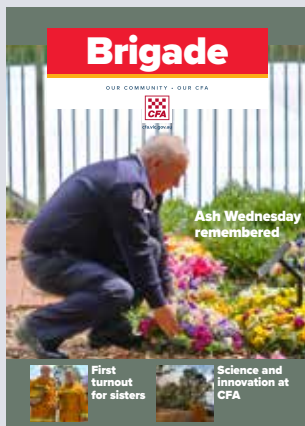
twitter.com/cfa_updates

CFA intranet:
members.cfa.vic.gov.au

Free CFA images for download:
digitallibrary.cfa.vic.gov.au

Community engagement material:
cfa.vic.gov.au/cecontentportal

CFA templates for download:
cfa.vic.gov.au/templatetoolkit



COVER PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM AFSM



Autumn 2023

IN THIS ISSUE

- 04** News from our leaders
- 06** Remembering Ash Wednesday 40 years on
- 08** Women in Leadership Mentoring Program
- 09** The latest on culture review
- 10** **Feature:** Science and innovation at CFA
- 13** New school fire safety program
- 13** Help with Fire District Review Panel response
- 14** Large airtanker training
- 15** Wheeling out new heavy tankers
- 16** Update on operational projects
- 17** Australia Day Honours
- 18** Wandong Juniors
- 19** New firefighting gear in production
- 19** CFA's new electric cars
- 20** Quarterly Operational Update
- 23** First turnout for sisters at Mosquito Creek
- 24** Understanding Black Summer
- 25** Faces of CFA
- 26** Learning from real incident case studies
- 32** 2023 State Firefighter Championships
- 34** **Feature:** Developing good succession plans
- 36** Major bushfire at Flowerdale
- 37** Incident statistics
- 38** New weather stations boost weather predictions
- 39** Get physical, get healthy
- 39** Creating safe work environments
- 40** New MEUs take to the road
- 41** Prototype pumper tanker ready for action
- 42** Through the ages: Warburton Fire Brigade
- 44** Emergency Memberlink offers



CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



Natalie MacDonald

As the 2022-23 fire season ends, I want to thank all the volunteers and staff who have contributed countless hours responding to a large number of incidents across the state.

The effort which goes into keeping millions of Victorians safe cannot be underestimated, ranging from planning and community preparedness activities to operational support and response.

Over the past month, a number of documents have been released which are important to our organisation's future. The Fire District Review Panel released its initial determination about changes to fire risk across Victoria as part of a process to consider potential changes to the Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) district boundaries.

Developing CFA's response to the Panel is a key priority over the coming months and we will be actively working with brigades to provide a strong evidence base for our submission. Any final decision will be made by the Minister in the second half of 2024.

The Fire Services Implementation Monitor has also released his second Annual Report to Parliament, assessing how EMV, CFA and FRV are embedding the reforms against a number of actions in the Fire Services Reform Implementation Plan.

The report shows progress in a number of areas and, pleasingly, it acknowledges CFA's commitment to taking decisive action to strengthen our culture following the release of the independent Culture and Issues Management Review.

As part of the steps we are taking in response to the review, we have launched CFA's Diversity and Inclusion Strategy following extensive consultation with our members.

The Strategy sets out a clear action plan to ensure we have an organisation which values and supports all members and where everyone feels able to contribute.

Since the last edition of Brigade Magazine, new stations have opened at Casterton and Plenty, with a number of others due for completion in coming months. The rollout of the new ultra heavy tankers is also about to get underway, with the vehicles delivered over the next two years.

We've also launched our next generation wildfire personal protective clothing (PPC), featuring lighter weight material and improved design and functionality. We look forward to seeing these on our volunteers when they become available later this year. Meanwhile, the delivery of CFA workwear reached a significant milestone, with the 10,000th set delivered in early April.

In closing, thank you to the thousands of members who collected for the Royal Children's Hospital Good Friday Appeal. CFA is synonymous with the Appeal, raising more than \$36 million over seven decades, reinforcing our commitment to helping others and our strong connection with the community.

CHIEF OFFICER



Jason Heffernan

After the flood event in the last quarter of 2022, our volunteers and staff have been busy dealing with a spate of fire activity and other incidents across the state. We have seen an increasing trend of grassfires that need 20 or more tankers, including the Flowerdale fire, the Maintongoon fire near Bonnie Doon and another at Valencia Creek.

This highlights how quickly the lack of rain can create dangerous fire conditions and, with the outlook for drier conditions this year we can expect to face similar challenges next season.

The arrival of the cooler months does not mean we take our foot off the pedal, but rather use this time to complete after action reviews, train and be prepared for the future.

The diverse range of skills of our members was highlighted when CFA members responded to the Costerfield Mine fire on 5 March. The 15 mine workers were able to extinguish the fire before evacuating to their underground refuge chambers. CFA's Oscar 1 mine rescue team joined forces with the Fosterville mine rescue team and made sure the air was safe and breathable before escorting the workers to the surface.

The initial determination of the Fire District Review Panel has been released, outlining where the Panel believes fire risk has changed, potentially affecting CFA/FRV boundaries in some areas. CFA has until 30 January 2024 to finalise our submission and over coming months we'll be engaging with members to identify how we can address any areas of heightened risk as part of the response.

Any decision to change boundaries would be made by the Minister for Emergency Services after the final report is released in June 2024.

Our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy was released last month, addressing some of the recommendations of the independent Review of Culture and Issues Management. Ensuring that all CFA members feel safe and supported is critical to making our organisation a great place to volunteer and work. All of us have a part to play in making this happen, regardless of your rank or role.

On a reflective note, we marked the 40th anniversary of the Ash Wednesday bushfires at a service in Cockatoo, where hundreds of CFA members and the community paid their respects to the 14 firefighters who died and reflected on events of that day.

Finally, it was great to be able to see the talent, energy and enthusiasm of our CFA members at the annual CFA/VFBV State Firefighter Championships. Each year, this event brings together brigades from across the state in the spirit of competition and camaraderie which is truly inspiring.

DCO SOUTH EAST REGION



Trevor Owen

I've been travelling across the region visiting proud and dedicated brigade leaders at their fire stations. Without fail all have reported issues linked to population growth and change in risk. It seems the face of many rural and regional communities has changed rapidly while our focus has been on COVID-19.

There were some examples across South East Region where rural towns had almost doubled in population in the past three years. This growth was largely driven by working families from Melbourne suburbs wanting a change of lifestyle. No longer do people have to travel to a city office to work.

With this shift to rural living, CFA brigades have an opportunity to recruit new members. Brigades offer a great social network and connection for people moving into a new community. It's up to all of us to ensure our brigades are a place where people want to contribute, feel welcome and valued.

I'm very impressed with the professionalism shown by the brigade leaders I've visited. They are adapting to meet the challenges of the changing risk. I've had some really mature discussions about innovation, flexible service delivery options and practical solutions. This further reminds me of the talent and wisdom of our members who bring tremendous life and professional skills to CFA.

CFA is ready to grow and meet the needs of the changing risk within communities. It's how we have successfully evolved across the past 78 years. We are capable and skilled to respond to remote bushfires, while at the same time respond to the most complex structure fires and rescues.

From the Warragul Heavy Hazmat POD to the CFA/ VICSES East Gippsland Technical Rescue team, to Berwick Emergency Medical Response to Fish Creek Road Accident Rescue, CFA is a 'can-do' organisation. We're always there to help our communities and partner with other emergency services organisations in times of emergency.

While growth is challenging at times, it does present a great opportunity for CFA and our members. We know our communities and therefore understand our risk. Our members are innovative and agile in meeting their local community risk. This is not always straightforward and requires us to think outside of the box as community service delivery needs change.

Growth and changes to local risk for CFA isn't new and we will always step up to the ever-changing needs of our communities. We have come from humble beginnings, but we will always remain in high standing and depended upon across all Victoria.

GROUP OFFICER DISTRICT 24



David Box

Hello all. I'm the current Group Officer for the Bogong Group and have the pleasure to work with our group management team (GMT) to support our brigade members and our neighbouring groups.

Bogong Group takes its name from Mount Bogong, the highest point in Victoria. The group was established in 2011 and includes 14 brigades from Falls Creek to Beechworth. The group's brigades are divided into three hubs because of the large area involved, with two deputy group officers for each hub.

My focus as Group Officer is to ensure we keep working together and keep the communication opportunities happening. We consider ourselves to be a fairly active bunch and meet each month at a different venue. We have full Bogong Group meetings each quarter, eight GMT meetings a year, and an annual GO, DGO and captain meeting either post or pre-summer season. We also have five local command facilities and have developed a Group LCF team to support them.

We've developed many group initiatives including our own set of Group Standard Operating Procedures and position description roles for everyone in our GMT. We also have a Bogong Group web page, developed by DGO Cameron McKern, which has become a significant communications tool for our group leaders and brigade members.

A major initiative in the past two years is the development of our Pathways Document to strengthen training. Managed by our Group Training personnel, this identifies the training needed by our members as they make their way towards their ultimate role and strengthen our brigades' operational capability.

I was thrilled when I heard the group had been awarded \$580,808 following an application (in partnership with Indigo Shire Council) for a Black Summer bushfire recovery grant. This money will be used to further the Bogong Group solar project, which is a significant volunteer-driven initiative.

By installing solar power arrays and battery storage systems in Bogong Group fire stations, we will have power to our facilities during future natural disasters and technical outages. This will enhance community resilience by instilling confidence that a nearby emergency services facility can support first responders and offer a gathering place for local residents if the electricity grid and/or communications are not operating.

Although there's still quite a bit of work to be done to complete the station works, we are well underway. When the project is complete it will be a huge achievement for everyone involved.

Our GMT members in their individual portfolios are always proactive, looking for the next opportunity to support Bogong Group brigade members and their communities.

Remembering Ash Wednesday 40 years on

On 16 February 1983, Victoria was subjected to one of its most devastating fire emergencies – Ash Wednesday. These tragic events are permanently etched in the minds of several generations of Victorians and for many people the effects are ongoing.

More than 16,000 firefighters from agencies including CFA, Forests Commission Victoria (now known as Forest Fire Management Victoria), and the Metropolitan Fire Brigade (now called Fire Rescue Victoria) battled more than 180 fires on that day, working tirelessly to protect their communities. They were supported by Victoria Police, VICSES, Ambulance Victoria and our other emergency services partners, as well as countless local agencies.

Tragically 47 Victorians lost their lives, including 14 CFA firefighters from Pantom Hill, Nar Nar Goon, Narre Warren and Wallacedale brigades. The loss of life may have been far greater had it not been for the commitment of those on the ground and behind the scenes.

As one of the most bushfire prone areas in the world, Victoria is used to the challenges of fire. However, stories of Ash Wednesday tell of the extreme and unprecedented nature of the weather conditions. No amount of effort to fight or control the fire could have succeeded until conditions moderated.

On Sunday 12 February 2023, CFA hosted a state-based service at the Ash Wednesday Bushfire Education Centre in Cockatoo to mark the 40th anniversary of Ash Wednesday. The event allowed CFA to honour and remember those lost, acknowledge all those who served, and reflect on their experiences, resilience and road to recovery after that devastating day.

Hundreds of CFA members joined CFA Board and Executive members, families, emergency services sector partners and local community members. If you were unable to attend on the day or watch the live stream, you can watch a live recording of the event on the CFA website: cfa.vic.gov.au/about-us/who-we-are/major-fires/about-ash-Wednesday. A special booklet was produced for the event and this can also be viewed on the CFA website.

CFA thanks all those who fought the Ash Wednesday fires for their sacrifice and commitment. We will continue to remember and honour those who fought and those who were lost.

There were many lessons from Ash Wednesday which led to important changes including improvements in planning, procedures, research, training, resources and welfare support.

Protective equipment for firefighters, vehicle design and safety, communications systems, and community warnings and education were also updated and improved. We continue to learn and improve with every incident and fire.

This anniversary and anniversaries of other natural disasters or traumatic events can bring up difficult and often painful memories and feelings including sadness, fear and grief. Sometimes emotions relating to the event can intensify trauma. If you experience strong emotions, we recommend you contact Lifeline on **131 114** or Beyond Blue on **1300 224 636**. CFA members and their families can also phone the CFA Wellbeing Support Line on **1800 959 232** for free, confidential access to psychologists, counsellors, peers and chaplains. The Organisational Wellbeing team has also developed a tipsheet called 'Coping with difficult anniversaries', which can be read on Members Online: members.cfa.vic.gov.au/resources/health-safety-and-wellbeing/wellbeing-hub.





Reflections from volunteers

East Trentham/Mt Macedon fire

“We saved the pub and all the people inside, but so much of the town was destroyed that we felt helpless. It wouldn’t have mattered how many tankers we had.”

Keith Miles, Macedon Fire Brigade

Otways fire

The howling, northerly wind was so strong we could hardly stand up. Having to choose which house to save and which to leave was a terrible thing when you know who lives there. After the fire, it was white with ash. It was eerily quiet. There were no chattering birds and no leaves rustling in the breeze.

Bill Bubb AFSM, Anglesea Fire Brigade

Belgrave Heights/Upper Beaconsfield fire

We couldn’t hold the fire so we were sent further along to try to get ahead of it. Unfortunately, that was impossible so we just did what we could, wherever we could. We never stopped fighting until late that night.

Lisa Hicks, Narre Warren North Fire Brigade

Warburton fire

We quickly sprang into action as the fire took off like a tornado. It caused a spot fire in front of it and when the two fires joined up the roar was unbelievable. On Old Warburton Road one bluestone home exploded in front of us from the heat, but we saved all the other homes.

Barry Marshall AFSM, Warburton Fire Brigade

Cockatoo fire

Being the last fire to start that day, every tanker was committed elsewhere. The centre of Cockatoo was bedlam with cars trying to leave town. The wind was incredible, but only lasted about 20 minutes. It had pushed the fire so hard that by the following morning most of the town was lost.

Graham J Simpson AFSM, Cockatoo Fire Brigade

Building the capability of women volunteers

Developing volunteer leaders is critical to CFA's success. By addressing barriers to progress for women volunteers, particularly those in operational roles, we can grow the future pipeline of women leaders and improve gender balance in brigade leadership roles.

The Women in Leadership Mentoring Program started in November 2022, and was initiated by the Women's Advisory Committee and funded by the Volunteer Leadership Development project. From more than 100 expressions of interest, 44 CFA members (22 mentors and 22 mentees) were selected. Program participants come from all regions.

Designed to support women volunteers who are currently in, new to, or wanting to step into, leadership roles, the 12-month pilot program will provide support and guidance, break down silos, share knowledge, skills and experience across the state, and build and recognise people's existing capability.

The initial workshop in November was an opportunity for mentors and mentees to establish their partnership agreements, meet other participants and create connections with leaders. The workshop also explored what it takes to be a good mentor and how to get the most out of the mentee experience.

Throughout the remainder of the program, mentees will be supported by their mentors to achieve their individual goals. In addition, all participants will have opportunities to attend development workshops, learn more about different areas of CFA and build networks across the group.

Individual check-in conversations with participants during February 2023 identified a range of initial benefits for both mentees and mentors including shadowing opportunities in incident control centres, visits to the State Control Centre, support to address and resolve outstanding issues of concern within brigades and learning about good practices in different



brigades. Several mentees reported that their self-confidence had increased.

The working group that developed the program is planning a second cohort of women members in mid-2023.

This program is one of several initiatives to support improved gender equality in CFA, to address recommendations from the External Review of Culture and Issues Management. Other initiatives include:

- Women's Challenge Camps to build operational skills and develop peer learning networks
- Women's Burn Days which enable hands-on skills in the planning and management of roadside burns
- pilot of the women-only General Firefighter course
- establishment of the Women of CFA Facebook page which provides a safe space for women across CFA to ask questions and share their knowledge and experiences.

STORY TRACEY RUSE

Bartlett, helping your brigade protect life and property

Flexitanks



- Utilised in firefighting applications
- Suitable for training and field use.
- Available tank sizes 500L - 24,000L
- Supplied with ground sheet / carry bag
- Detachable lids available
- Helicopter capable collar available



Order today!

Free Call 1800 115 440
172 Ring Road, Ballarat, Victoria
www.bartlett.net.au

Bartlett
Industrial Textile Product
Manufacturing



Culture change at CFA – our Implementation Plan

CFA has produced a draft Implementation Plan in response to CFA's External Review of Culture and Issues Management ('the Review') which was released on Members Online in June 2022.

The CFA Board accepted all 10 recommendations in the Review, and an Implementation Plan was developed which contains multiple actions to address these recommendations over the next three to five years.

Although it was approved in principle by CFA's Board and Executive in December 2022, it was important for the plan to be provided to members for review and feedback before finalisation.

A series of member briefing sessions were held during January and February 2023 to allow members to hear about and share their views on the Implementation Plan. Written feedback was also invited. Most members welcomed the plan and its comprehensiveness.

HOW WAS THE PLAN DEVELOPED?

Existing initiatives and activities were mapped to the recommendations, including work that started during the period of the review. This was so that we could make sure we identified potential linkages and synergies between different areas of work so that the final Implementation Plan was feasible and properly connected to other key activities.

A project control board comprising senior leaders from across CFA and VFBV was formed to develop a set of actions to deliver each recommendation in consultation with relevant areas.

WHAT DOES THE PLAN INCLUDE?

The Implementation Plan contains clear and specific actions against each of the 10 recommendations and includes the accountable areas within CFA responsible for leading delivery. Timeframes to begin and complete all activities are included.

Here are the actions delivered so far.

- CFA publicly recognised past harm to members in the form of an apology from CFA Chair, Chief Executive Officer and Chief Officer (response to Recommendation 1.1).
- CFA developed the draft Implementation Plan and it is being communicated to members (response to Recommendation 1.2).
- 'Lead cultural and organisational reform' embedded in Chief Officer's Annual Expectations of Districts (response to Recommendation 2.5).

- In consultation with VFBV, we reviewed the terms of reference for the CFA-VFBV Joint Consultative Committees (response to Recommendation 2.8).
- Commenced development of comprehensive frameworks for technical capability and leadership capability (Response to Recommendation 3.5).
- Finalised all legacy complaint matters (response to Recommendation 4.4).
- Finalised and launched our Diversity & Inclusion Strategy 2023-25 (response to Recommendation 7.1).
- Continued delivery of Women's Captain Forum, Captains Mentoring Program, Women's Challenge Camps and Women's Leadership Mentoring Program (in response to Recommendation 7.3).
- We will soon deliver a new Issues Management and Resolution Support Dashboard to give greater transparency and accountability of complaints through reporting (in response to Recommendation 4.1).

WHAT CAN I OR MY BRIGADE DO?

All members have a role to play in creating the culture that will make CFA a great place to work and volunteer. The roles of brigade management teams (BMT) and group officers are especially important for leading change and setting 'tone from the top' in their brigades and at the group level.

There are simple things that BMTs can do to begin with.

- Discuss the Implementation Plan at a brigade meeting and think about how you can contribute to some of the actions in your brigade.
- Let your district know that you want to participate in a Behavioural Standards session.
- Display the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy's Table of Actions in your station and consider the things you can do in your brigade to respond.

Cultural change at CFA and ensuring that all members have a positive and enriching experience is the responsibility of each and every one of us.

To keep up to date with progress, ensure you are subscribed to Member Updates through Members Online: members.cfa.vic.gov.au/resources/organisational-culture/culture-and-issues-management/external-review-of-culture-and-issues-management.

If you have any questions or further feedback about the Review, email externalreview@cfa.vic.gov.au.

STORY KYLEE BATES

Science and innovation at CFA

At CFA, we recognise that Victorian communities and our natural and built environments are changing rapidly. Associated with this are rapid changes in the nature and occurrences of fires and other emergencies.

To remain effective at protecting lives and property, CFA must adapt to ensure that programs and services meet these new challenges. To do this CFA requires evidence to help us understand our risks, the needs of CFA members and the needs of Victorian communities. We also need evidence about the effectiveness of our programs to achieve organisational objectives and evidence that ensures the safety of our operations.

To achieve this, we need to work collaboratively with our industry, academic and sector partners, as well as work with Victorian communities to better understand their future needs and expectations.

The CFA Research and Development (R&D) team works across the sector to identify our challenges and develop, conduct and commission scientific projects to ensure these challenges can be met. To ensure that decisions made are supported and informed by the best available evidence, CFA has one of the strongest R&D teams in the Australian emergency management sector.

Having internal scientific capabilities and capacities in CFA means we can:

- be effective and informative when communicating within CFA and with communities
- develop an ability to anticipate and manage the risks of fires and other emergencies under changing climates in dynamic landscapes and emerging residential settings
- develop, deliver and assess innovative fire prevention, preparedness, response and recovery strategies and products in increasingly complex circumstances
- increase our knowledge to improve performance, services and outcomes for communities and CFA.

The R&D team includes scientific and technical professionals who conduct and manage high-quality research, develop products and innovate to improve operational and strategic bushfire management. The team works with other fire agencies and research organisations, and provides scientific advice to inform CFA policy and procedures as well as communicating findings internally and externally.

The team works closely with field staff when designing research and adopting the findings and products, to ensure outputs and outcomes are fit for purpose.





Additionally, the team is part of CFA's preparedness and response community as volunteer members and through incident support roles such as fire behaviour analysts and mappers.

KEY PROJECT AREAS

The R&D team is involved in more than 40 research and development projects. These include projects that better determine our risks in relation to fire and climate, research into better ways to measure our fire suppression effectiveness, work to better engage with communities, and development work to produce innovative tools and products that provide better information to those making decisions. Some of the key project areas are described below.

Fire suppression effectiveness

There are many ways to fight a fire. Here are some of the areas we are investigating to improve how we do things so that fires can be safely extinguished with few impacts to lives and property.

- We are looking at how we can use information from the fireground to understand how fires are being put out, including investigating suppression rates, the role of aircraft and the tactics used for different types of fires.
- We are exploring how information can be better used during fires, including how to generate useful information between the fireground and incident control.
- By observing fireground conditions, we can ensure our vehicles, equipment, PPE and training are best practice.
- Analysing links between incidents and weather determines whether our responses are appropriate given the conditions.

Landscape risk and fire behaviour

We have a number of projects that are trying to better identify when and where fire risk changes in the landscape.

- By working to better understand the conditions that lead to fires 'blowing up' and becoming almost impossible to control, we can provide better information to those on the fireground. We're doing this by reconstructing historic events, collecting fireground observations and undertaking experimental work to look at how fires interact with the atmosphere – particularly where thunderstorm-like activity is generated by the fire.
- We are working to understand the processes by which forests transition from being too wet to burn to when they will support uncontrollable fires. This is being done through analysis of historic information as well as in-field live fire experiments.
- We are undertaking research to better identify when grasslands change in condition and the degree of curing (the proportion of dead grass). This includes improving mapping methods to take advantage of new satellites, working on methods to identify where crops are planted and developing systems to detect when crops are harvested (as there is a subsequent change in fire risk).
- Doing live-fire experiments helps us to better understand how fires burn in different crops and pastures so we can improve the way we respond and how we identify where the greatest risk is.
- Investigations into linkages between vegetation properties and fire behaviour helps us to better understand the effectiveness of burning and other fuel treatments.

Climate change

We have predictions of how fire weather will change with climate change, but to understand how fire risk will change we are carrying out several research projects.

- How landscape fuels are likely to change with increasing temperatures, changing rainfall patterns and altered fire regimes. This includes identifying which communities are most vulnerable to more frequent fires based on the type of vegetation.
- How changes in fuels, fire weather, dryness and altered ignition sources combine to change the nature of future fires (when, where, how often, how big, etc).
- Assessing the demands on our resources including our volunteers. This includes looking at the consequences of more frequent drought and changes in the proportion of vehicles being electric.

Social science

Projects are helping us to understand the needs and expectations of CFA members and community members to successfully use decision-making support tools.

- We are leading a national project in collaboration with state and national bodies looking at how public information and warnings are produced and shared. It will test a range of predictive products to improve the design, communication and dissemination of information to the public.
- We are working with the CFA Health Services team to develop a monitoring, evaluation, reporting and learning framework. This will allow CFA to better understand the impact of its activities and identify opportunities for improvement.



Innovation and development

The CFA R&D team is at the forefront of developing products, systems and tools that can be used to provide information to those making decisions.

- The CFA Grassland Curing Monitoring system tracks the curing of grass across Australia through the fire season. Curing is mapped using satellites and these maps are then ‘corrected’ using information from a network of volunteer grass observers. Since 2013, and throughout six states and territories, more than 60,000 observations have been entered into the web-based grassland curing system. The maps that are produced feed directly into other systems including those that calculate Fire Danger Ratings and the Phoenix fire model.
- The Air Attack Supervisor (AAS) tool is an information dashboard designed to bring air attack information into one place. This allows individual fires to be reviewed so we can understand suppression effectiveness and fire impacts. Information on the dashboard includes dispatch details, drops and fills.
- We are developing a prototype Bushfire Preparedness Service. This system brings together information about historic fire seasons and shows how the current fire season compares. This information helps decision-making related to fire risk, such as aircraft placement or the declaration of Fire Danger Periods. Currently, rainfall and curing products are published daily on the Research and Development page on Members Online, with more information sources to come.
- We are contributing to the improvement of the new Australian Fire Danger Ratings System (AFDRS). We have been studying the AFDRS ratings and providing advice to the National Development Team about how it can be improved.

CFA’S RESEARCH STRATEGIC PLAN

To ensure we adopt a strategic approach to research at CFA we’ve developed the Research Strategic Plan 2030. This outlines our research commitment, themes and priorities. It describes how research will support CFA to deliver on its commitment to Victorian communities and statutory responsibilities as we face emerging and significant challenges in the years ahead. It will remain a ‘living document’ that will be periodically reviewed and updated to reflect organisational objectives and political commitments.

To read the document go to <https://applications.cfa.vic.gov.au/mycfa/Show?pagelD=displayDoc&docId=037011>

To learn more about the R&D team and its work, search ‘CFA research and development’ on Members Online.

CFA members who are interested in discussing research needs or project ideas with the R&D team are encouraged to email bushfire-research@cfa.vic.gov.au

STORY SARAH HARRIS AND TOM DUFF



Help with CFA's Fire District Review Panel response

CFA members will be an integral part of CFA's response to the Fire District Review Panel's (FDRP) assessment of Victoria's fire risk and fire district boundaries. On 30 March 2023, the FDRP released its 'initial determination', which outlines the fire risk across Victoria.

The FDRP, established by legislation on 1 July 2020, provides independent and informed advice to the Minister for Emergency Services. Its role is to review Victoria's fire risk every four years and this year's report is its first. In

the initial determination, the panel advises whether there have been changes in fire risk – or something that may result in a change in fire risk – that may warrant a review of the FRV fire district.

To find out more about what the determination means for CFA brigades go to members.cfa.vic.gov.au/FDRP. The Volunteer Forum on 26 April will also contain a briefing on the FDRP determination.

CFA has the opportunity to respond to the determination by 30 January 2024 to demonstrate how it can

address areas of heightened fire risk by developing a statewide plan. All brigades that are potentially affected by the determination will contribute to CFA's statewide response to the FDRP by developing district plans, led by the district assistant chief fire officer.

FDRP will consider submissions by CFA and others, then prepare its final determination for the Minister for Emergency Services by June 2024. The Minister will then decide whether to change any of the FRV fire district boundaries.

Students fired up to learn about local risks

In the past few years, Harkaway Primary School has endured months of lockdown, COVID-19 outbreaks, storm damage and power outages. Students felt disconnected and isolated as they tried their best during remote learning.

Responding to this period of change, the teachers did something innovative – they participated in a modern approach to bushfire education that encompasses the knowledge of fire experts, educators and the children themselves.

This approach, based on the research of Dr Briony Towers, has been developed through a collaborative multi-sector process, supported and jointly funded by CFA and the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action as part of the Victorian Government's Safer Together initiative. Natural Hazards Research Australia also contributed funding.

The result was an engaging, transformative classroom experience, delivered by teachers and supported by experts. The local CFA brigade and the Department of Education's emergency management officer also pitched in.

Students learned about fire ecology, Aboriginal cultural burning, bushfire behaviour and risk. They identified and discussed local problems in their school community and designed solutions with the help of subject matter experts.

They produced impressive and engaging projects that made tangible contributions to disaster risk reduction, including videos, animations, websites and video games. They covered topics such as emergency management planning, property preparation, cultural burning and much more.

"It's very important kids learn about bushfires, as they can carry the knowledge they have gained into their older life," said one



student. "It's been fun. We've learned a lot and it's been a really great experience," said another.

This trial showed how students can make meaningful contributions to disaster resilience in their local community and gain important life skills in the process. The program is being taken up by more schools across Victoria, where we hope to see more children playing an active role in reducing bushfire risk.

To find out more, email n.munro@cfa.vic.gov.au.

STORY NEIL MUNRO



Large airtanker training day

In February CFA volunteers from North West Region joined Forest Fire Management Victoria personnel at an intensive large airtanker reloading training day.

The seven CFA fireys headed to Bendigo Airport to hone their skills, focusing on how to efficiently reload the airtankers – a session that forms part of a broader major airtanker education rollout across Victoria.

CFA Deputy Chief Officer for Operational Response and Coordination Garry Cook AFSM attended the training day and highlighted the importance of regular skills maintenance sessions for volunteers to sustain their knowledge and expertise for when they are required out in the field.

“We had two large airtankers in Victoria for this summer. We had crews undertaking the exercise on the Q400 – that’s a large capacity airtanker – and the RJ which they also loaded,” he said.

“Essentially the training is about familiarising yourself with the load points on the large airtankers themselves as well as operating the pumping systems to get the water.

“We used water for the training, but we could also be using foam here at Bendigo.”

The large airtanker is the biggest and most effective water bomber available. Garry said that now the volunteers have sound understanding of the aircraft, they can pass on the information to their brigade members.

“They can now share what these aircraft are capable of doing, in terms of what they carry and their turnover times,” he said.

“It’s really important to understand that the aircraft that go out to fires actually need to go back and land, and somebody has to reload them.

“It’s a whole logistics exercise. It’s not just about the aircraft dropping on the fire, it’s what makes the whole system work.”

Following their theory class and drills connecting the hoses to the bombers, the volunteers witnessed a drop across the runway.

“The crews that participated on the day are interested in this task to essentially help our frontline firefighters,” he said.

“The fires know no boundaries and the way that we train to reload these knows no boundaries either. It was an all-agency effort here.”

Strathfieldsaye Fire Brigade volunteer Sara Fitzroy-Moore, who was inspired to join CFA to serve the community and to help people, was among the members who got involved in the reloader initiative.

“I thought it would be interesting to do, and a good way for me to support my region and my local fire brigade as well as help others in the process,” she said.

“I’ve now learned how to load an aircraft safely that is designed to drop water on fires and discovered how to operate a large pump.”

Now a source of information for her brigade, Sara also said that alongside Junortoun brigade, a team will be formed to help support this initiative in Bendigo to further equip the right people for when an aircraft is required.

“It will also support fire crews statewide because the faster we can turn around these firefighting aircraft, the more beneficial it’s going to be for our crews on the ground,” she said.

“The best thing for me to witness during the reloader training was the actual aircraft we’re going to be servicing in the future.

“It’s fantastic to see them on the ground, understand how they work and how we can work with them.”

STORY LUCY BISHOP

Wheeling out new heavy tankers



Tankers are a vital part of CFA's fleet, with more than 1,900 across the state. CFA is continuing to roll out 48 heavy tankers to brigades as part of the new replacement tankers program. Earlier this year, CFA announced the final 28 brigades to receive a heavy tanker.

The fleet of new dual-cab trucks replaces single-cab tankers and allows a full crew to sit in the cabin.

Wangaratta and Inglewood brigades recently received their new tankers and brigade members said the trucks had significantly bolstered their incident response capability.

Wangaratta Fire Brigade Captain Jason Allisey said the brigade received the new tanker in late January.

"This tanker provides an extra 1,000 litres of water for our brigade, so that helps us further support FRV and CFA crews in surrounding areas – it's a massive boost for us," Jason said.

"The improved safety features are a great addition and it's very user friendly for our members."

Inglewood Captain Andrew Smith said the new tanker is an upgrade on the old truck.

"Simply being able to transport the entire crew inside the cabin, rather than splitting members between the cabin and the back of the truck has been a massive improvement in safety for us," Andrew said.

"At the end of the day we all want to come home from an incident and this tanker will help us do that.

"We provide significant support to all the brigades in our area and with the added water capacity they can lean on us more, which in turn will improve CFA's service to the community," Andrew added.

The heavy tankers feature a 15-tonne crew-cab chassis with a 4,000-litre water tank. Their 4x4 capability and automatic transmission help crews access fires in difficult terrain.

They also include features such as electronic monitors and electric rewind hose reels, and use a higher percentage of recyclable build materials. The heavy tankers have a 1,200 litres per minute diesel engine-driven firefighting pump, vehicle roll over and burnover protection, and full equipment stowage cache.

Last year, CFA announced the first 20 heavy tankers would be allocated to: Inglewood, Shoreham, Dunkeld, Buninyong, Mansfield, Merbein, Poowong, Peshurst, Ballan, Wangaratta, Caroline Springs, Hastings, Noorat, Creswick, Seymour, Junortoun, Moorooduc, Beaufort, Wallan and Irymple.

Manufacturing of the heavy tankers began in September 2021 at Sunshine North manufacturer RA Bell, and the final vehicles are expected to be complete in September 2023.

The 48 heavy tankers were funded as part of the \$126 million CFA Capability Measures funding package.

STORY MITCH GASTIN



Update on new technology

CFA teams are working on several technology projects to support brigades to protect lives and property. Here are updates on two of our major projects.

Brigade capability app

CFA's Baseline Capability Profiling App (BCPA) is an information app created to provide data to support capability business planning. This will let brigades and members across CFA make informed, data-driven decisions that enhance the services they provide to their communities.

The BCPA brings together more than 60 million pieces of data from sources including CFA's Resource Management System, Fire Investigation Reporting, Systems Analysis Program and the Learning Hub as well as external sources such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics, and presents it in an easy-to-use visual format.

This is the first time CFA has brought together this amount of data into a single interactive application.

A test version of the BCPA has been piloted by districts, regions and state teams since 2018, and the positive results have led to a production version being made available to members of brigade management teams (BMT), group management teams (GMT) and district planning committees (DPC).

There are many benefits to using the app including providing the ability to better plan and prioritise at the brigade, district, regional and state level. The data is particularly useful in helping identify specific training opportunities or requirements, as well as vehicle and equipment needs and resource allocation. Also, understanding activity enables better prevention and preparedness planning and because everyone has access to the same data, communication about issues and needs is much easier across all levels of CFA.

The BCPA presents data on a calendar-year basis to provide up-to-date data for post-fire season planning purposes. Data feeds into the app are live, so information appears in the app within 24 hours of any updates in the CFA data systems.

The app has undergone rigorous internal and external testing to ensure the security of the data and that it functions optimally. There will be some limitations on who can access the app, but if you have a CFA member email address and a role on a BMT, GMT or DPC, or are a 1st to 4th lieutenant at a brigade, you should be eligible for

access. Eligible members who wish to access the app will first need to complete prerequisite training available in the Learning Hub.

Members who don't hold an eligible role, but who believe they have a requirement for the app should speak to their ACFO or commander for authorisation. For more information visit Members Online.

Radio replacement pilot

A program to replace all CFA Tait TM/TP9100 radios is progressing, with pilot field testing of preferred products underway in Districts 5, 14 and 22.

The Radio Replacement Program aims to ultimately replace the current radio fleet across the state including all mobiles, portables, bag radios, vehicle-mounted repeaters and local bases. There is also provision for many additional radios to be funded under the program, significantly increasing our current capability.

The new radios will introduce a welcome technology refresh with enhanced features and functionality for members. The pilot will help determine if the preferred products offer the best radio solution for CFA's needs.

The pilot is being conducted as close to operational conditions as possible. Volunteer trainers are training their fellow members before they use the products to ensure their safety as well as effective testing of the products.

Existing Tait portables as well as some Tait mobiles (in identified and agreed vehicles) will remain at the pilot brigades as a backup.

ACFO Operational Communications Jason Lawrence was grateful to those brigades who were supporting the pilot testing.

"The project team would like to thank all contributing members for their support," Jason said. "We appreciate the patience shown by everyone as we embark on an exciting journey through the pilot."

For information about the pilot or for any queries please email radioreplacement@cfa.vic.gov.au

STORY SHAUNNAGH O'LOUGHLIN

Australia Day 2023 Honours



Robert Small AFSM

Robert Small is well known for his exemplary leadership, guidance and support, and commitment to firefighter safety. Highly respected by his peers, Robert has held several roles across his 47 years of distinguished service including captain and lieutenant of Ferntree Gully brigade and deputy group officer with Knox Group.

Dedicated to developing and mentoring CFA members, Robert is committed to supporting CFA's training and skills maintenance program. He has maintained his Training and Assessor qualification throughout his career to ensure he can facilitate training at the brigade, district and regional level.

Robert's extensive operational experience, team focus and leadership ability have also made him a highly sought-after fireground commander and leader at major fires and incidents.



Neil Marshall AFSM

Neil Marshall has been a distinguished contributor to CFA at a brigade, group, region, Board and national level across his more than 60 years of operational service.

He is an active member of Pantom Hill Fire Brigade and a veteran of major fires including Ash Wednesday, the 2006 alpine fires and the 2009 fires. He is also a founding member of the District 14 Headquarters East Fire Brigade and provides extensive knowledge and experience to its members, particularly in a training capacity.

Neil was a member of the CFA Board from 1986 to 1991 and in his capacity as its deputy chair played a key role in the introduction and documentation of the AIMS system and processes which are now used nationwide.



Michael Rowe AFSM

Many people across CFA and the wider emergency services have benefited from Michael Rowe's vision, diligence and commitment to community safety and inclusion across his 41-year volunteer career.

Michael's passion, advocacy and knowledge – for preventative burning in particular – has inspired many. In 2015 he released a book called *The Art of Roadside Burning*, a manual that supports brigades to undertake controlled roadside burning safely and productively. Michael is also a strong supporter and advocate for gender equality. In 2018 he introduced women-only burn days to encourage more women to get involved in, and experienced in, roadside burning. This unique event has drawn widespread acclaim, with ongoing benefits to the hundreds of participants.



Mark Cartledge AFSM

A dedicated and values-driven leader, Mark Cartledge has made a significant contribution across his 30 years of service to CFA.

The Ballarat Fire Brigade captain is passionate about road rescue and ensuring his members have the most up-to-date equipment and training in order to best support their community. He also facilitates road rescue training with student paramedics to give them a greater appreciation of the rescue units skill set and conducts awareness sessions with surrounding brigades to ensure cooperation and understanding at collision scenes.

Mark has also worked tirelessly for victims of road trauma. For the past 13 years he has volunteered with Amber Community (formerly Road Trauma Support Services) to encourage disqualified drivers to change their behaviour to reduce road accidents and save lives.



Kenneth Stuart AFSM

Ken Stuart has given more than 55 years of service to CFA and his community, including 20 years as captain of Mount Taylor Fire Brigade. His leadership has taken the large and active brigade to a new level – the brigade received Victoria's first Special Recognition Award for its role in assisting communities devastated by fires as well as work in fire prevention and community protection.

Ken's passion is serving his community though his influence extends far beyond that of a single brigade. Renowned as a mentor of others in fuel reduction and back burning techniques, his expertise in the construction of firebreaks and back burning is widely credited with preventing the 2007 alpine fires reaching the heavily populated areas around Bairnsdale and reducing the impact of the 2020 fires on these areas.



Trailblazers in Wandong



Wandong Juniors experienced a revival in 2016 thanks to the persistence of a brigade member's daughter. That single young voice led to the development of a two-year plan to deliver the Junior Volunteer Development Program (JVDP).

The Junior brigade launched with eight Juniors and four Junior leaders and has maintained stable numbers since, with a mix of brigade members' children and young people from the community. The brigade now has seven Junior leaders.

The program runs every Monday night and the Junior leaders meet before each school term to plan the activities, while also ensuring that the young people help to plan activities they want to do.

The wide range of activities includes simulated search and rescue, first-aid training, hose bowling, radio relays and scavenger hunts. The activities prepare young members for becoming future firefighters, but also develop leadership and life skills for outside the brigade.

"The Junior Program isn't all about becoming a firefighter," Junior Leader Terry Roberts said. "We endeavour to give life skills to all our Juniors including the ones who don't want to go on to become a senior member."

Popular activities also include visits to other local brigades, as well as exchange visits to the local VICSES unit and guest visits from other emergency services such as Victoria Police.

The past few years have had their challenges, though during COVID-19 lockdowns Wandong Juniors kept connected by running online sessions and using quiz platforms such as Kahoot to continue to learn new skills and develop their knowledge. This also helped maintain social connections, which is an important part of being a Junior.

Developing an engaging relationship between the Juniors and the wider brigade is important to Wandong's Junior leaders.

"The Junior brigade has a good relationship with the seniors," Terry explained. "Juniors attend the brigade awards night, we

hold combined training days and often invite a senior member to attend a Q&A night with the Juniors.

"Another way we build relationships across the brigade is to encourage a Junior to present the Junior brigade report at senior brigade meetings."

Creating opportunities for the brigade to connect across all age groups of membership has led to the successful transition of several Juniors into senior membership, including Terry's daughter Caitlin. She joined Wandong Juniors in 2016 when she was 11 years old. In 2018 she was elected Junior captain and in 2020 she won the Spirit of CFA Youth Award.

Family and serving the community are both important to Caitlin.

"My dad has been in CFA since I was a Junior and CFA has always been in my life," Caitlin said. "I went to the station with him and I was always interested by it. My involvement with CFA is partly a family tradition and partly to give back to the community to do something to help those who need it."

In March 2023 Caitlin represented CFA at an International Women's Day event run by the Emergency Services Foundation. In a session discussing how the sector could encourage more diversity, Caitlin spoke about her experiences as a young member of CFA, highlighting the importance of including young people in emergency services.

"As young people are starting to step up we're seeing things change; there's a lot more diversity," Caitlin said. "We need diversity because with it comes people with different experiences and different answers to the same question and by working together they find solutions."

"I encourage brigades to get out in the community and try to recruit more young people. Young people connect with young people. We are the future of emergency services."

STORY BY JEN CLEMENT

New firefighting gear

CFA firefighters can look forward to donning an upgraded set of their iconic yellows, following the awarding of a \$10.8 million contract that will deliver 29,000 sets of next generation wildfire personal protective clothing (PPC).

Local Australian manufacturer Stewart & Heaton Clothing will supply the updated gear to all volunteer firefighters across Victoria. The new PPC is funded as part of the Victorian Government's \$126 million CFA Capability Measures funding package following fire services reform.

CFA Chief Officer Jason Heffernan said the new generation wildfire PPC is just another example of how CFA continues to move forward as a modern fire service.

"These exciting new firefighting garments have been designed with a focus on improved safety features and innovation," Jason said. "CFA's highest priority is its members' safety and we are committed to equipping our firefighters with modern protective equipment."

The new gear will keep CFA's iconic yellow, but will feature lighter weight materials with improved design functionality and ergonomic performance to ensure our firefighters are more comfortable.

The jackets will feature a new epaulette holder on the chest area, reinforced elbow patches, front top and lower pockets on both sides, pen opening on top pockets, radio pockets along the side seams and microphone loops.

The protective trousers will incorporate new elastic back waistbands with large belt loops, two back pockets and hip and thigh pockets.

The new garments will meet the needs of CFA's diverse membership with tailored designs that ensure a safe and comfortable fit for all members.

The new PPC will be provided to all operational members. Recipients can continue to use their current wildfire PPC as well as the new garments.

The large-scale staggered rollout of the new PPC will begin in the next few months.

STORY AMY SCHILDBERGER



PHOTO: BLAIR DELLEMIJN

Charging into the future

CFA is driving down electric avenue with the addition of eight full-electric vehicles to its fleet. The Hyundai Kona electric pool vehicles can be used by all CFA members.

They were partly funded through the State Government's Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) program that's being delivered by the Department of Treasury and Finance.

Two vehicles will be based at East Burwood Headquarters, one at CFA's State Logistics Centre, and one car in each region based at Ballarat, Bendigo,

Dandenong, Geelong and Seymour. At the end of last year, 7kW charging stations were installed at all locations.

The fully-charged car has a range of about 450 kilometres and will be used primarily for short trips when members attend meetings, training sessions, brigade support and community events in their area.

CFA Fleet Coordinator James Roy said the introduction of electric vehicles to the fleet had many benefits.



"These ZEVs will contribute towards meeting Victoria's net-zero emissions targets by reducing our carbon footprint, provide cost savings to CFA by reducing running costs with fuel and maintenance, and by improving productivity with less downtime," James said.

"Inclusion of the electric vehicles is another way CFA continues to evolve, improve and innovate to remain a world-class fire and emergency service."

QUARTERLY OPERATIONAL UPDATE



Chief Officer's Message for March 2023

As the weather cools, I would like to thank our members for their ongoing efforts to support their communities throughout the fire season. Our members entered the season after months of sustained operational response supporting those parts of the state that were in the midst of a flood emergency and are to be commended for their dedication and hard work.

The March Quarterly Operational Update includes:

- Recovery of CFA vehicles
- Wellbeing
- Mobile data terminals
- Post-season debrief program.

I encourage all members to consider how the information shared in this operational update can be incorporated into brigade, group and district operations, training and exercises.

A number of CFA vehicles required recovery during the flood response and early in the fire season. It is important that brigades familiarise themselves with the process of safely recovering a vehicle. Additional material about this is included in this update and a case study about a safely recovered pumper can be found online through the QR code below.

CFA is committed to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our people and their families. Mental health and wellbeing are just as important as physical health. After months of working hard, members should reflect on their efforts and remember to look after their wellbeing while keeping an eye out for other members who may be struggling. The information provided in this update by the Wellbeing team has key information about the resources and support available.

The update also includes an update about the Mobile Data Capability Project, An initial proof of concept trial of the CFA platform and applications is well underway.

Finally, this update includes an overview of the Post-Season Debrief Program 2022-23 which aims to capture observations from CFA brigades, districts and regions regarding how we prevented, prepared for and responded to fires and other emergency events throughout the season. Conducting after-action reviews (AARs) is a vital part of improving how we operate. The contribution of members to the conduct of AARs and how well we do them is essential if we are to do our jobs well and ensure the ongoing safety of our members and the community.

In addition to the material in this update, three case studies with key lessons have been published by the Lessons Management Centre, including a Hume Freeway truck fire, the experience of a Rochester strike team at the floods and a Violet Town truck crash. I encourage all members to familiarise themselves with these case studies.

I would like to acknowledge the valuable work that each of you contributes during what can be extremely difficult circumstances and acknowledge the impacts that these contributions have on you and your families. Thank you for your continued commitment.

Use this QR code to access the quarterly operational update material and other topics of interest, or go to www.members.cfa.vic.gov.au/brigades-operational/resources/quarterly-operational-updates



Update on the Mobile Data Capability Project

CFA's Mobile Data Capability Project (MDCP) will provide CFA volunteers with the necessary information to serve their communities more effectively.

During periods of high operational activity, radio congestion can be an issue, and CFA members have strongly supported the need for a mobile tablet that provides easy access to incident information and an alternative to radio transmission to communicate with ESTA dispatch.

The mobile device will directly communicate with the ESTA CAD system, ensuring that incident information received by the firefighters is timely, relevant and accurate. In addition, the MDCP will also include applications such as FIRS, HAZMAT, ANCAP and Fire Mapping. As it's portable, it can be used outside the vehicle.

The tablets will be initially rolled out to primary response tankers, pumpers and specialist vehicles. Command vehicles will be considered at a later point in the project.

The project's four phases are:

- Phase one:** An initial proof of concept (POC) trial of the CFA platform and applications. This phase is well underway and aims to conclude in late May 2023. Thirty tablets and docks have been delivered, plus sim cards for internet connection. Brackets are currently being manufactured.

- Phase two:** CFA will work on integrating the ESTA CAD system and will develop an app interface for it. Although this app will not be included in the initial POC release, discussions with ESTA and Motorola are already underway.
- Phases three and four:** Phase three will focus on rolling out the mobile data capability project to other groups, and the final phase will consider the inclusion of Field Command vehicles.

The security software will allow ICT to provide ongoing support and remote upgrades, making sure the devices are always up-to-date and ready for use. Applications for the POC trial have been completed, and we are currently developing the main navigation screen. Testing the POC devices and apps is crucial to ensure they work correctly and meet the project's objectives.

Volunteers in the trial will be fully informed about the new system. CFA will provide training and brief brigades on their use while also obtaining brigade feedback to help guide the design.

This project is an exciting next step for CFA in supporting volunteers with the information they need. Following the POC trial, we can look forward to rolling out tablets to selected vehicles across the state.

Follow the progress of the project at members.cfa.vic.gov.au/mdcp or use this QR code.



Recovery after disaster

Being on the frontline of major fires and floods not only affects CFA members as first responders, but also as members of the community who have suffered loss.

Although our experiences vary, we often share common reactions and needs. Some changes you may experience following a disaster are shock, fear, guilt, confusion, intrusive thoughts, feeling tense, difficulty sleeping, withdrawn or irritable.

There are many factors that influence our reactions to events. For example, any stresses

and strains we were experiencing before the event can make recovery harder.

While it's important to give ourselves time to recover, it's also essential to know when to ask for help. If you are still experiencing some of these changes after a few weeks, it's worth considering additional support. Please call the Wellbeing Support Line (**1800 959 232**) to get in touch with a peer, mental health clinician, chaplain or member of the Organisational Wellbeing Team.

How to support your recovery

PAUSE Take a moment to acknowledge the event and how difficult it has been. It's okay to feel and behave differently in the aftermath. These changes are normal and temporary.	CONNECT Spend time with family, friends and colleagues. Share what you've experienced and how you are feeling. Talking through our experiences assists recovery.	HEALTH Get plenty of rest and sleep if possible. Focus on nutritious foods and physical activity. Be mindful of your alcohol intake and any other coping strategies that aren't helpful in the long-run.
ROUTINE Return to your normal routine when possible and avoid major decisions while you are still strongly impacted by the event.	RELAXATION Take time to do things you enjoy even for short periods. Consider breathing exercises, muscle relaxation or meditation to help with relaxation. There are plenty of online resources to guide you.	SEEK HELP If the impact is lingering, seek additional support via the Wellbeing Support Line on 1800 959 232 or see your doctor/other health professional.

Post-season Debrief Program

At the beginning of March 2023, the Chief Officer's Post-season Debrief Program was released. The program identifies key insights, trends and opportunities for improvement from the fire season so that CFA can improve at local, district, regional and state levels.

Members, particularly those in brigade management teams and group management teams, are encouraged to review the information on Members Online to understand their obligations under the program.

Any observations captured by brigades form part of the statewide analysis that is conducted. What might be a small issue for your brigade could be occurring at multiple locations across the state and by submitting your observations and after-action reviews (AARs) we can identify these trends.

The outcomes of the AARs will inform the ongoing cycle of learning and improvement in CFA and the sector by validating and evaluating existing doctrine, arrangements, policy, procedure and incident/emergency management application. The outcomes

will provide evidence to inform a range of activities including training, exercising, briefings and potentially new equipment or services.

The spirit of an AAR is one of openness and learning. It is not about fixing or allocating blame. An AAR allows participants (either as individuals or as a group) to work through a series of questions that enables them to reflect on an experience to uncover lessons in a non-punitive environment.

CFA provides a suite of resources to support the program which includes debriefing guidelines, an online survey to capture individual observations, templates to support AARs and an online training package about how to run AARs.

To read more about the program and access these resources, go to members.cfa.vic.gov.au/brigades-operational/operational-debriefs/post-season-debrief or use the QR code.



Recovering a bogged or disabled CFA vehicle

It's not uncommon for CFA vehicles to become bogged or disabled in the field, and it's a firefighter's responsibility to know how to safely and effectively deal with a disabled vehicle.

The first step in any recovery is to report the bogged and/or disabled CFA vehicle to Firecom according to the process in SOP 12.05 'Safely recover disabled CFA vehicles', then maintain safety at the scene by securing the CFA vehicle to ensure it and the surrounding area are safe. Warning devices such as reflective triangles can be placed around the scene. CFA members should remain with the vehicle to avoid potential damage or vandalism. If it's not practicable and/or safe to remain with the vehicle, the vehicle should be secured as much as possible.

It's important to remember that CFA vehicles must not be used to recover disabled vehicles by towing or by any other means, unless approved by a DMO and it can be done safely by competent and endorsed CFA members using towing hooks and appropriate equipment on the vehicle.

The state or district duty officer, in conjunction with a DMO, the crew leader and driver of the disabled vehicle, will determine how to recover the vehicle. A vehicle recovery officer in charge of the vehicle recovery must be appointed before starting the recovery. This person must be suitably competent in vehicle recovery.

There are many factors to consider when recovering a vehicle:

- Is the vehicle in 4x4?
- Are the hubs locked in?
- Is there hard ground close by?
- Is the vehicle still full of water?
- Who will be in the bogged vehicle when it's being recovered?

- The condition of the equipment being used
- The right equipment
- Enough equipment
- Environment
- Weather
- Damage sustained to the vehicle
- Not to damage the vehicle any further
- Who is in charge?
- Time of the day for lighting, etc.
- Fireground activity
- Expertise already on scene.

Vehicle recovery is an essential skill for firefighters to master. Follow the reporting process, maintain safety and work with the DMO to plan a safe recovery. Remember to always follow established procedures, use appropriate equipment and work in teams to ensure that everyone is aware of what's happening and can react quickly if necessary.



Buzzing after their first turnout

Sisters Morgan and Montana Maud have always understood the importance of volunteering. Growing up with a community-focused mindset instilled in them from their parents, the pair joined Mosquito Creek Rural Fire Brigade together last year.

“We like to give back to the community. We’ve grown up knowing the value of volunteering, so we thought joining CFA was the perfect opportunity to give back,” Morgan said.

Undertaking their General Firefighter training side by side has benefitted both sisters.

“I love having Morgan on this journey with me, because it’s been really valuable to have someone go through the exact same thing,” Montana said. “We’ve been able to bounce off each other and learn with each other at the same time.”

“It’s great doing it together and having each other to debrief with,” Morgan echoed.

Both Morgan, now the brigade’s community safety officer, and Montana, 4th lieutenant, recently attended their first turnouts. Morgan attended a motor vehicle collision, while Montana was paged to a grass and scrub fire.

“Going on our first turnout was a very daunting experience to begin with,” Morgan said. “There’s so much hype about going out to an incident and you don’t really know what to expect.

“I attended a motor vehicle collision, and when we got there Victoria Police and our brigade’s other tanker were already there. Having a role that was important was a great way to get rid of the nerves of the initial turnout. You realise it’s a controlled environment and you’ve got people there who will support you.”

Montana agreed that nerves were definitely present after hearing her pager for the first time.

“I attended a grass and scrub fire and I was so nervous heading to the incident. You’ve trained for and visualised it, but it’s so different when it’s actually happening. It was really intense, because you get on the fireground and a lot happens very quickly, but it’s amazing how your training kicks into gear and everything becomes second nature.

“I think we’re very lucky in our brigade that we have such a supportive crew, and I felt really comfortable being where I was on the truck. It made it a very comforting and easy experience.”

Both Morgan and Montana agreed that the General Firefighter course left them well prepared to attend incidents, and that the mentorship they have received from other members has been of great value.

“We definitely walked away from General Firefighter training better off for completing it. We met some incredible people who gave so much time and energy to us. We’re forever grateful for those people and think very highly of them,” Morgan said.

“We learned so many things that we put into practice today, both at turnouts and otherwise,” Montana said. “I will always remember the things that those more experienced have taught us and continue to teach us.”

Looking forward, the sisters are keen to continue turning out to incidents and increasing their knowledge.

“Now that we’ve been on our first turnout, I feel a lot more relaxed about getting a pager callout,” Morgan said.

“Looking forward to future turnouts, it sounds strange to say but I’m actually really excited for it,” Montana said. “I’m really eager to go out and learn more. I’m excited about what’s to come and what I will experience.”



PHOTO: EDDIE SEAH

STORY TIAHN WRIGHT



UNDERSTANDING BLACK SUMMER BUSHFIRES THROUGH RESEARCH

Science is shaping how Australia can better prepare for devastating bushfire seasons with the release of comprehensive research based on the major issues of the 2019-20 Black Summer fire season. The wide-ranging Black Summer research program was carried out by Natural Hazards Research Australia and the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre in the years since the 2019-20 fire season, with support from the Australian Government and partners, including CFA.

The program drew on the expertise of Australia's best fire and climate scientists, human geographers, land managers and public health and recovery experts at 28 research institutions, First Nations organisations and fire and land management agencies.

A new report, *Understanding the Black Summer Bushfires Through Research*, summarises the research findings from 23 projects, including research in collaboration with CFA. It presents an integrated view of the way forward from the fires, including exploring why the 2019-20 fire season was so devastating, what new capabilities can be implemented and how Australia can best learn from its worst fire season on record. The report and an accompanying Hazard Note (research briefing paper) are available at naturalhazards.com.au/black-summer.

Insights from the research provide Natural Hazards Research Australia partners in government, fire and emergency management agencies and community organisations with an up-to-date scientific basis to make decisions about how best to allocate resources, manage the environment and help communities prepare, respond and recover.

Some projects focused on what could be learned at a national level, while others analysed specific fire behaviour or technology in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia.

CEO Natural Hazards Research Australia Andrew Gissing said the research was based on the issues of the 2019-20 fire season, but the findings could be applied to management, safety and community resilience for all natural hazards around Australia.

"This is vital new Australian science about how to keep our landscapes and people safe from bushfire," Andrew said. "Our



fire seasons are getting longer and dangerous bushfire days are becoming more frequent. We need to be smarter and use this new scientific knowledge and research to improve the ways we live with fire.

"The 2019-20 bushfires were long and challenging. This research has improved our understanding of how the extremely dry conditions and record-breaking temperatures impacted our weather in ways that previously were not as well understood.

"This research will guide how bushfire risk can best be managed through better science, policy and practices. The strength of the science was its multi-disciplinary approach that will lead to action – better bushfire modelling, better warnings, better land management including enabling cultural fire and better recovery after a disaster for those affected will come from this research."

Commenting on the benefits of the Black Summer research program in the report's introduction, Sarah Harris, Manager of Research and Development at CFA, reiterated the importance of sector partnerships to keep communities safe from bushfire.

"The collaboration between the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC, researchers and agencies was essential to ensure the research needs of the agencies were understood. I think it's important that project teams work together and share data and knowledge to build a complete picture of Black Summer."

STORY NATURAL HAZARDS RESEARCH AUSTRALIA



Faces of CFA

BLADE LARKINS, MOOROOPNA FIRE BRIGADE, DISTRICT 22

What is your CFA role?

I am currently the 1st lieutenant and my responsibilities are the operational planning for the brigade. This includes pre-planning on high-risk sites, supporting the BMT and captain. I have held this role for about a year, and before that I was the 3rd lieutenant.

Why did you join?

I joined after completing my Minimum Skills in high school. I then joined the running team in the Juniors at Euroa. After moving around a little, I called Mooroopna home and then joined the brigade.

What incident has had the greatest impact on you?

For me every incident has some impact and this could be good or bad. The floods in October 2022 has been the most significant for me. Seeing the devastation of our local community. It was incredible to watch CFA members who, despite having their properties impacted, were still available to not only maintain fire response but also support with the flood response.

Who have been your mentors in CFA?

The diversity in CFA means everyone you engage with has knowledge you can learn from. But more specially, it started with Paul Murray, my high school teacher and member of Longwood Fire Brigade. He taught the Advance class where I completed Minimum Skills.

Lyle Sinclair was captain when I first joined Mooroopna and he is still the captain. His leadership and ability to develop our members has supported my growth and leadership within CFA and in my work. There are so many more people I could mention that have supported and mentored me, with each providing me with a different way of looking at things.

What have been the highlights of your time in CFA?

My highlights include every incident that has had a positive outcome, including when a child's hand was stuck in a door. I felt a sense of relief when their hand was freed. Another highlight is whenever I can give people who are unwell the care they need until they can be transported to hospital. I also get satisfaction when I help to contain a fire to a small area with minimal damage.

Being elected to brigade officer positions were also highlights, as is representing CFA at the Goulburn Murray Fairley Leadership Program for 2023.

How do you motivate your brigade members?

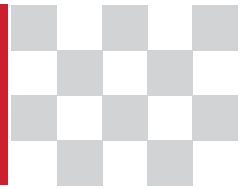
You need to get to know your members to understand their drivers and values. Although we are all part of the same organisation and join for similar reasons, all brigade members are different and have different values. I try to treat everyone with respect and give everyone equal opportunities. I believe that if people are valued and given the opportunity for growth, they are likely to stay motivated.

What lessons are you most keen to pass onto other members?

As a younger leader I strongly encourage our young members to have a go. I also encourage our members to learn more around cultural assets and cultural fire. We need to work with the Traditional owners as if they are a support agency to ensure the cultural aspect has been considered.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I like to spend time with my family, exploring the great outdoors by heading to the bush, fishing, camping, hiking – anything to do with nature. I also like to help my son play sport and enjoy coaching his under-10s basketball team.



Hume Freeway truck fire

Summary

On the evening of 8 February 2022, a fire broke out in the trailer compartment of a B-double truck on the Hume Freeway near Broadford. The incident was complex as it required the suppression of three separate fires that all posed different challenges. The Hume Freeway was immediately closed northbound to traffic for several hours, followed by the closure of the southbound lanes when resourcing allowed. No one was injured. The scene was declared under control at 3.40am.

Incident overview

At 11.11 pm on Tuesday 8 February 2022, a truck fire was reported on the Hume Freeway, Broadford. Initially it was called in as a trailer fire and then further information was provided that confirmed it was a truck. However, because of the limited information there was still confusion over whether it was a prime mover or B-double that was on fire. The Broadford brigade pumper and tanker were first on scene and they quickly identified there were three fires that were well alight and needed to be addressed:

- An oil fire running down the western side of the road, caused by oil leaking from the B-double.
- The B-double fire itself.
- Grass and scrub fires on either side of the freeway that the truck fire had ignited.

The fire involved motor and hydraulic oil products in a mixture of container sizes from 500ml to 1000-litre IBCs (intermediate bulk containers).

The fire was well alight before the first crews arrived. A total of 23 CFA vehicles attended the scene, including support crews, FRV, SES and Victoria Police. The incident was sectorised into three sectors: northern; water; and BA. Members initially focused on the oil fire that was running towards the Broadford trucks and people and stationary traffic, as these posed the greatest danger. Water was used to help extinguish the oil fire, though this action initially caused the fire to flare to a significant height before there was any cooling effect. By containing the oil to the dirt areas on the roadside, the table drain created a catchment for the burning oil which was eventually dammed so a foam blanket could be applied to stop the oil constantly reigniting. This reduced the intensity of the fire.

The next focus was to obtain the manifest from the truck to identify what fuel it was carrying. The manifest contained detailed information about the 33,000 litres of the various types of fuel, including oil and turpentine products. Thermal imaging cameras assisted greatly to detect the amount of fuel remaining in the truck. Additional vehicles and a hazmat specialist were called to assist with containing the oil spill after it had been extinguished.

The truck fire and the grass and scrub fires were eventually extinguished by crews.

Towards the end of the night, tree hazard assessments were undertaken in the surrounding bushland with help from SES. Arborists were brought in by VicRoads to commence tree felling. The scene was declared under control at 3.40am.

Challenges faced

- **Access and traffic:** The Hume Freeway is a significant transport route. Due to the nature and location of the fire, many vehicles were stranded on the freeway for the duration of the fire which restricted the space that members could work in. Victoria Police had limited resources on the night and were unable to block off and divert the southbound traffic. This also caused issues for attending brigades that mostly approached from the south, because they had to take a longer route to reach the incident.
- **Tree hazards:** A qualified member with the assistance of an SES safety officer identified any potential tree hazards. It would have been beneficial to have an additional assessor to assist. VicRoads organised arborists for tree felling but they were reluctant to fell trees unless they were likely to fall on the road. This posed a safety risk to crews blacking out.
- **Fatigue management:** Towards the end of the incident, managing fatigue proved challenging. Further resources were required to assist with blacking out, but members were conscious it was the early hours of the morning and the availability of surrounding brigades after being out all night. The incident did not close out until 2pm the next day and crews were exhausted.
- **Resources:** The bulk foam tanker was requested by the incident controller (IC) and deployed by the FSCC. In addition, an ultra-heavy pumper was also deployed. This wasn't suited to the conditions and not discussed with the team on site. Members were not aware that the ultra-heavy tanker was being deployed and they did not have the opportunity to incorporate it into their planning. Under such difficult circumstances clear communication is important. This enables the IC to incorporate any responding specialist vehicles and equipment into their strategies and tactics or cancel them so they can be available for other jobs.
- **Water supply:** Initially, water supply was an issue. Members operating in the northern sector had to wait for Seymour brigade members to travel and get water early in the incident, until trucks could travel to the northern sector. Brigades also had to travel to and from Broadford or Tallarook to collect water. Other water sources were considered such as dams, but this was not possible.

What worked well

- **Sectorisation:** This occurred early on and was highly effective given there were three fires to contain.
- **Firefighting tactics:** The way the members tackled the oil fire was highly effective. The use of water to knock the heat out of the fire until foam could be used was successful. Containing the oil in the dirt shoulder also proved to be effective.
- **Use of thermal imaging cameras:** Given the nature of the combustible materials involved, the use of TICs allowed members to quickly identify how much remaining fuel was in the truck and to target hot spots.
- **Atmospheric monitoring:** This provided confidence about the safety of personnel and the public and the ability to get close to the incident without needing BA. The benefits of the environmental monitoring also ensured that the members and vehicles could be staged closer given the conditions (maintaining a smaller incident area) and they could be confident that P2 masks were not required except for any dust hazard requirements.
- **Early resource request and placement:** The requests for additional resources contributed to the effective incident management and suppression of a complex fire. As it became obvious that the oil fire was the more urgent extinguishment priority, several vehicles had to be moved because they were in the direct path of the fire that had unexpectedly moved. This was managed well and quickly arranged while continuing to contain and attack the fire.
- **Interoperability:** Interoperability between CFA and FRV was high, with good liaison and communication between all agencies involved.

Lessons identified

- **Respiratory protection:** Members were not wearing masks during the event. In this case atmospheric monitoring indicated they were not required, though they were on hand. Members should always consider whether there is a need to wear P2 masks, because conditions can change. Using atmospheric monitoring is an effective way to inform the decision about the need to wear masks.

- **Hazardous trees:** Members should be aware of the potential for tree hazards. Even though this was reported as a truck fire, it spread quickly to the surrounding bush. This caused multiple tree hazards which required extensive felling to make the area safe.
- **Water supply resources:** Consideration should be given to procure a bulk water tanker or collar tanks in this type of incident. Members should have a thorough understanding of how to procure them outside the fire danger period, to assist with the relay and water supply.
- **Available resources:** Not all members knew what resources they could request, such as the foam pod. There is a need to understand local knowledge and equipment and how to use it, as well as the specialist resources that can be requested at a state level. This information should be incorporated into local pre-planning and training for incident controllers.

Questions for your brigade

- Does your brigade have pre-incident response plans for complex fires involving combustible materials in your area and how often do you review them?
- Does your brigade have response plans for an incident regarding access routes in high traffic areas, where resources are unable to block off or divert traffic?
- Is your brigade aware of the hazards of a running oil fire and the best way to combat it?

Conclusion

The successful extinguishment of this complex fire can be attributed to the determined and continued efforts of all the crews involved. Quick thinking and astute decision-making contributed to the protection of members of the public and CFA members and vehicles during this incident. The high level of interoperability between all agencies contributed to the successful outcome, despite some shortfalls in resources. All crews involved worked tirelessly and should be commended.

This case study was developed from the after-action review that was completed by the responding crews who wished to share their experience. If you have any lessons to share, contact lessons-management-centre@cfa.vic.gov.au.



Strike Team 1421 at Rochester floods

Summary

The October 2022 floods significantly impacted the Rochester community. Strike team 1421 (ST1421) from District 14 went above and beyond to relieve some of the pressure on the local brigade. This case study, written from the perspective of Strike Team Leader and Doreen Fire Brigade Captain Robert Bury, explores the experience of the strike team (ST) with a focus on the heartwarming story of the Captain Koala comfort bears and how they benefited the local community.

Incident overview

Like most Victorians, I knew about the floods from the frequent news reports and wondered when my brigade might be asked to respond and assist. The request came as I was preparing to leave for a holiday in Queensland. I informed the deputy group officer (DGO) that if they couldn't get anyone else, I was happy to assist. Thirty minutes later the DGO called to let me know that I was selected to be the STL.

As I notified my employer and began preparing for the deployment, it became apparent just how different flood relief is from fire response. At the flood-affected incident, things moved at a more leisurely pace, there were no lights and sirens and the situation we faced wasn't as obvious as the columns of smoke and flames we encounter when approaching a fire.

The next day the strike team was formed and I met the team I would be responsible for over the next three days. I put them at ease by briefing them with the limited information I was provided.

We created a WhatsApp group for the ST leaders to stay connected, and then we set off to Rochester. En route we checked in with the district duty officer (DDO), logistics teams and the Rochester Fire Brigade captain. The captain was relieved to hear from us and filled me in on the situation they were facing – 97 per cent of the structures in Rochester

were flooded, including brigade members' homes and the fire station.

The drive was mostly uneventful, though when we were 13 kilometres from Rochester, it was clear we were moving into the flood-impacted zone. A tree was down and blocking half of the highway lane. We advised Firecom and continued travelling to Rochester. We came across more indicators that flood waters had passed through the area, as there was a lot of water around and debris was stuck high in the fence lines.

At Rochester Fire Station, we were greeted by the local members and it was clear from their faces they were in a world of hurt. We were given a small tour of the station and could see the level the water had reached on the walls. We also saw a young girl in the station who distressed by the situation. She was the daughter of a Rochester brigade lieutenant who escaped the rising water in their home and went to her grandparents' farm, assuming it would be safe. Unfortunately, the farm flooded too and the girl had to wade through waist-high water until a boat arrived to pick them up.

Hearing the girl's experience was heartbreaking. I remembered that in the field command vehicle (FCV) we stocked a few Captain Koala comfort bears, and we gave her a teddy that we keep for such occasions. The instant smile on her face made it all worthwhile.

We later received a briefing from the Rochester captain who advised that our first task was to door knock every house, perform welfare checks and to check on missing people. It was explained that if the house was stripped and the furniture or carpet was outside in front of the property, we would know that someone had already attended the property. The main concern was the homes that hadn't done this, appearing untouched, with no signs of life or other intervention. When we came across such a situation, we performed an external search and requested the support of Victoria Police before making entry to the property.



This day proved challenging for the strike team. We came across a few properties that appeared untouched. At one house there was a suitcase on the bed but no other signs of life. Crews interacted with community members who were visibly distraught, and everyone handled these situations professionally.

The next day we started with toasted sandwiches from a local café and picked up some doughnuts to share with Rochester brigade members and the ST. It was heartwarming to see the delight on the faces of the Rochester members. That day we were tasked to help strip the Rochester Hospital (Rochester and Elmore District Health Service) after it had been inundated with floodwaters.

Initially, I was the middleman – the control centre at Rochester brigade tasked me and I then tasked my crews. After discussion with the Rochester captain, it was decided it would be more effective for the control centre to directly task the crews and I took on an 'overwatch' role to assist as different challenges arose. This included being dispatched to the outlying areas to check on people at the request of family. At one such stop, an older retired CFA member took a shine to my CFA cap. Of course, I gave it to him and his wife was pleased to receive a comfort bear.

I spent a lot of time at Rochester Hospital directing crews and assisting where I could. When unattached CFA crews arrived at the hospital from various brigades, we tagged them onto the strike team to continue the cleanup in a structured way. At one point I even directed a contingent of the military – it's amazing how an STL's tabard, radio, grey hair and fabulous moustache can give the impression of being in command.

During this day, I became aware of a woman who had lost her husband in the floods and was distressed by the delay of the insurance company to send an assessor. She had received assistance earlier that day from a government representative who told her the state would help. We subsequently arrived later that afternoon to strip the house as requested. I was introduced to her and presented her with a comfort bear which brought about her first smile in a few days.

By the third day, we had found our groove and worked together well to complete what had to be done. The day concluded with a final debrief at Rochester Fire Station with the captain, who was quite emotional with a tear in his eye when thanking the team for their efforts. I too shed a tear as this was the most satisfying strike team I've been part of.

Over the course of the strike team, I learned about Rochester brigade and the fabulous bunch of people who serve their community. As I looked up at the worn and tattered CFA flag flying outside their station, we resolved to do something more. We sent a care package, which included a new CFA flag, with the strike team following us. I'm happy to say that the flag is now flying at Rochester as a sign of resilience and hope, alongside the Captain Koalas comfort bears dotted across the town.

Lessons identified

- **Logistics:** If an ICC is in place managing an incident, they should be making arrangements for all meals for your strike team. If arrangements have not been made, they may not be aware of your deployment to the incident. Strike teams should make contact with the ICC logistics function to determine if arrangements have been made.



- **Food:** If the incident management team (IMT) is not able to organise meals for your strike team, ordering large quantities can be difficult to organise at short notice and can put significant pressure on local restaurants. Wherever possible, place orders in advance if you know meals have not been organised by the IMT. There is potential that someone may need to pay for meals and be reimbursed so members should familiarise themselves with the reimbursement process to ensure any costs are recovered.
- **Captain Koala comfort bears:** The Captain Koala comfort bears provided moments of happiness to a community in a desperate time of need. The teddies can be used in a variety of contexts and brigades are encouraged to carry a few in their trucks as you never know when they may be helpful.
- **Use of phones:** During these incidents, phones are one of the main ways to communicate, particularly for the STL who needs to communicate with a range of people. It is important to keep your phone charged because it is often the only reliable way to communicate.

Questions for your brigade

- Consider how trauma teddies may assist other types of response, including motor vehicle accidents involving young children, community evacuation or structure fires.
- Do you have trauma teddies in any of your brigade vehicles? If not, discuss how to obtain these with your BASO.
- Are you and your crews aware of the safety issues with storms and floods?
- Are you aware of the storm and flood training package available to you on CFA's Learning Hub?

Conclusion

ST1421 performed an essential role at Rochester – supporting another community in a time of need. They learned a lot along the way and we encourage members to reflect on this and consider how you could take these points and incorporate them in local response and future strike teams.

Thank you to Captain Robert Bury from Doreen Fire Brigade for his contribution to this case study. If you have any lessons to share email lessons-management-centre@cfa.vic.gov.au

Violet Town truck crash review

Summary

An incident involving a collision between two trucks on the Hume Highway near Violet Town in north-east Victoria, resulted in two people being airlifted to Melbourne. The crash was complicated further because one of the vehicles was carrying explosives.

Incident overview

On 19 September at 2.06pm there was a collision between a B-double truck and a rigid truck which were travelling in the same direction. The incident occurred in the southbound lanes of the Hume Freeway between Harrys Creek Road and Quarry Road, Violet Town.

The initial reports stated there were possibly people trapped, possibly two people deceased, the cab was ripped off a B-double, one of the vehicles was carrying explosives and southbound lanes were blocked to all traffic.

First response was CFA, as per CAD response. Violet Town and Euroa brigades were followed by Benalla and Euroa SES rescue units, Ambulance Victoria and Victoria Police. A deputy group officer (DGO) from Euroa Group, who was in the vicinity of the crash, provided information.

En route, Commander Dedman liaised with District ACFO Tony Owen and the on-duty Fire Services Communication Controller (FSCC), resulting in FRV Hazmat 75 (from Shepparton) being responded to support operations.

The complex scene involved a B-double truck carrying a non-hazardous load which had crashed into the back of a rigid truck carrying 4000kg of hazardous materials – Class 1.1D Econotrim Buttbuster 378 mining explosives.

The explosives were packed in 160 cardboard cartons, 16 plastic tubes per carton. Damage caused by the impact resulted in several cartons spilling onto the road. Some cartons split and explosive tubes lay on the road surface.

The Hume Freeway southbound was closed to all traffic during the response and recovery phase which took about 24 hours. Initial traffic diversions caused some concerns because some B-double drivers ignored the diversions put in place. This resulted in large trucks getting stuck on inappropriate roads.

It is believed that the rigid truck may have sustained a mechanical failure just before the collision that disabled the truck while in a 110 kilometres per hour speed zone.

The B-double truck ran into the back of the rigid truck and came to rest against the wire road safety barrier with such force that the top half of the cabin was sheared off and deposited on the roadway beside the B-double, with the driver trapped in the cabin. The bottom half of the cabin pushed itself completely under the front of the A-trailer.

The trapped driver was situated within about 10 metres of the spilled explosives.

The driver of the rigid truck suffered a significant head injury, so care had to be taken removing him from the cabin.

The rigid truck containing the explosives suffered a punctured diesel fuel tank and diesel leaked onto the road and ran down the gutter towards the spilled explosives. The leaking fuel tank was plugged and a dam constructed using absorbent material to prevent diesel from interacting with the explosives. The material safety data sheet (MSDS) for the explosives stated an 85 per cent to 90 per cent content of ammonium nitrate.

Both trucks came to rest on the wire rope safety barriers on both sides of the freeway. This placed the wire barriers under tension and presented another risk. Unfortunately, a Regional Roads Victoria representative could not un-tension the wire without risking the safety of the people working on the extrication.

Specialist advice regarding the explosives indicated that heat, friction and shock were the main concerns with this product, and it was recommended that an initial exclusion zone of 1600 metres should be established. Taking into account this advice and following a dynamic risk assessment of the scene, the decision was made to mitigate the risks associated with the explosives while continuing with the time-critical extrications of the drivers. An exclusion zone was placed around the spilled explosives and instructions were issued not to move them.

After the drivers had been released and removed from the scene, an exclusion zone was placed around the accident site. The Major Collision Investigation Unit attended to investigate and an explosives recovery team from the manufacturer then conducted a clean-up.



Given the nature of this road accident, Victoria Police, through the local municipal emergency response coordinator (MERC) who was on scene, coordinated the incident and provided the incident controller function supported by CFA and Ambulance Victoria.

What worked well

- **Coordination of responding agencies:** The complex nature and long duration of the extrication of the B-double driver was challenging for rescue crews. A pumper from Station 75 (Shepparton) was responded to support the Heavy Hazmat from Station 75. A member on pumper 75 had heavy rescue experience from being stationed at Dandenong and their experience and support were appreciated by the SES rescue crews. This meant a true multi-agency rescue crew could work together and successfully extricate the occupant, who was airlifted to Melbourne.
- **Dynamic risk assessment:** Carrying out a dynamic risk assessment and considering all information allowed the agencies to develop a successful plan that allowed all agencies to undertake their tasks. Without considering all aspects of this incident and determining a safe and acceptable approach, it would have been easy to follow the initial safety advice about with explosives and introduce an exclusion zone of 1600 metres. If this had been done without undertaking an appropriate dynamic risk assessment, it would have had a significant impact on the trapped driver. If appropriate risk mitigation cannot be applied, you must follow specialist advice, but don't be afraid to question those providing specialist advice to ensure everyone has a good understanding of the situation.
- **Ask for help:** Don't be afraid to ask questions or ask for help. This was a complex incident with many challenges and a collaborative approach was important to the successful outcomes achieved.
- **Good liaison with district command centre:** Providing good onsite information and intelligence to district command centres (DCC) can help paint a clear picture of what you are facing and help them to give additional information and support.
- **Welfare:** Crew welfare during and after an incident is very important.

Lessons identified

- **IEMT briefings:** To achieve good outcomes at incidents, establish a formal incident emergency management team (IEMT) and conduct regular and inclusive emergency management team briefings to ensure a common operating picture is provided to all. Informal IEMTs occurred at this incident, but a more formalised IEMT bringing together all agencies would have improved the response. Rescue responders were busy with the complex long-duration extrication of the B-double driver and didn't have an identified agency member as part of the IEMT.
- **Diversions:** Ensure traffic diversions are set up correctly and diversion instructions are clear to prevent vehicles from travelling on unsuitable roads.
- **Determine the control agency:** Ensure timely, appropriate conversations are held with agency representatives, particularly where several



agencies or multiple responsibilities are present at an incident, to determine the control agency and incident controller.

- **Communications limitations:** There can be limitations with technology. At this incident, hazardous materials datachem information was emailed to the on-scene commander's mobile phone. Unfortunately, the signal was poor and it was not possible to download the information. Firecom was advised that a Hazmat Action Guide (HAG) should be used to obtain information, but the person relaying the information was not familiar with the HAG number process and didn't understand the TX code.
- **Stopping the fuel tank leak:** It was difficult to plug the diesel leak from the fuel tank to stop leaking diesel interacting with the explosives. Initially, the crews used an instant tank/drum repair putty that had been issued to some brigades. Unfortunately, this product stopped the leak for only about 30 minutes. Then a leak sealing paste, which is a standard stowage item on heavy hazmat vehicles, was successfully used. This is a superior product and works better on diesel leaks. Since this incident the district has purchased this leak sealing paste for several brigades, particularly those that have major highways and freeways in their response area.

Questions for your brigade

- Is there anything further you would consider when dealing with an incident of this type?
- How would you undertake a risk assessment?
- If a similar incident occurs in your area, do you know the resources available to you that you could draw on?
- How often do you review the use of the Dangerous Goods – Initial Emergency Response Guide (which should be carried on all vehicles) and review the use of the Hazmat Action Guide and HAG codes?

Conclusion

This case study provides valuable lessons that can be applied to various incidents involving similar challenges. It highlights the importance of a well-established coordination of responding agencies and the benefits of developing and maintaining interagency relationships.

Thank you to district 22 for developing this case study and sharing the information and lessons. If you have any lessons to share email lessons-management-centre@cfa.vic.gov.au.



Another successful Champs at Mooroopna

Urban and rural brigades from across the state travelled to Mooroopna across two weekends in March to participate in the 2023 Junior and Senior Firefighter Championships.

A deluge just days before the second weekend of events caused minor flooding and fallen debris at the event site. After a massive clean-up effort by CFA volunteers and staff with help from the City of Greater Shepparton council, spectators and competitors were treated to almost perfect weather for the intense competition.

Chief Officer Jason Heffernan said the Championships are not only important to our members, but are also a highlight of the CFA annual calendar.

“The State Championships are a big part of CFA’s volunteer culture. They promote the important values of teamwork and respect, as well as engage our members in some friendly competition with like-minded competitors,” Jason said.

Although there are no women-only events at the Rural Senior Championships, all-women teams have competed against all-men and mixed teams for many years. At the 2023 Champs, for the first time, the best all-women team was awarded the Outstanding Female Team Trophy. The winning team was Beazleys Bridge.

“A lot of rural female volunteers like to be treated the same as the men, which is why we haven’t considered doing a female-only event,” Chair of the Rural Competition Committee and Millbrook Fire Brigade member Neil Labbett said. “Everyone likes competing against each other.

“But we’ve decided to introduce this all-female team trophy, which is awarded to the female team with the most points.”

On the second weekend, the local community was treated to CFA’s iconic Torchlight Procession through Shepparton, highlighting the value of tradition in CFA. More than 1,000 people watched almost 40 brigades march through the streets. The event was led by a colour party, senior leaders from CFA and VFBV and fire trucks including a historic 1956 Austin pumper and a 1976 International Type 1 pumper affectionately called The Pink Panther.

Diamond Creek Fire Brigade, led by Fiona Macken, was judged as the winner of the Torchlight Procession. Jason said he was

impressed with the quality of all the participating brigades, who were judged on their presentation and appearance during the parade.

“The State Championships events, including the Torchlight Procession are an integral part of showcasing CFA to the community,” Jason said. “It was an honour to present the award to Fiona Macken on behalf of the brigade, especially as she recently celebrated 1,000 turnouts as an operational firefighter.”

The procession organisers are looking for more environmentally-friendly lighting alternatives than the traditional kerosene lamps that participants often carry. To meet this requirement, 10 prototype lanterns made of aluminium were created, which were carried by visiting interstate team Harvey from Western Australia.

Also, the Knox Group carried a battery-powered lighting design as their lantern. All lighting options will be evaluated for their effectiveness and participating brigades will be asked to provide their feedback.

The corporate tent again featured displays such as the latest highlights from training and infrastructure. The site was also used midweek by the District 22 Community Safety team to promote fire safety to almost 400 school children.

“The team took advantage of the facilities set up for the Championships so the children could learn about common home fire safety risks and how to prevent them,” Community Engagement Coordinator Emily Guthrie said.

“Some of the things we covered included practical activities like ‘stop, drop and roll’ and crawling low in smoke. We also taught them about creating a home fire safe plan and how to call Triple Zero (000).”

The aggregate results for both rural and urban events are shown opposite. A full list of 2023 results are on the VFBV website: vfbv.com.au

Congratulations to all brigades who competed. We look forward to welcoming more of our volunteers, brigades and local community members in 2024.

The 2023 State Firefighter Championships were supported by the Victorian Government.



URBAN SENIOR

Dry aggregate

1	Tatura A	21 points
2=	Melton A	16 points
2=	Harvey	16 points

Wet aggregate

1	Pakenham/Narre Warren	54 points
2=	Osborne Park A	52 points
2=	Wendouree	52 points
2=	Osborne Park B	52 points

A Section

1	Melton A	67 points
2	Harvey	64 points
3	Osborne Park A	63 points

A Section wet aggregate

1=	Osborne Park	52 points
1=	Wendouree	52 points
2=	Harvey	48 points
2=	Melton A	48 points

B Section

1	Osborne Park B	63 points
2	Pakenham/Narre Warren	57 points
3	Echuca	46 points

B Section wet aggregate

1	Pakenham/Narre Warren	54 points
2	Osborne Park B	52 points
3	Echuca	38 points

WOMEN-ONLY EVENTS (URBAN)

Female aggregate

1	Euroa	16 points
2	Melton B	13 points
3	Tatura A	11 points

URBAN JUNIOR

Dry aggregate

1	Melton A	43 points
2	Echuca A	26 points
3=	Euroa A	22 points
3=	Harvey	22 points

Wet aggregate

1	Melton A	28 points
2=	Echuca A	23 points
2=	Euroa A	23 points

Under 14 years aggregate

1	Euroa A	45 points
2	Echuca A	40 points
3	Maffra	21 points

Under 17 years aggregate

1	Melton A	52 points
2	Harvey	35 points
3	Grovedale	23 points

Grand aggregate

1	Melton A	71 points
2	Echuca A	49 points
3	Euroa A	45 points

RURAL SENIOR

Division 1 aggregate

1	Hurstbridge A	62 points
2	Eldorado A	48 points
3	Leopold A	30 points

Division 2 aggregate

1	Sedgwick A	68 points
2	Mandurang A	48 points
3	Hurstbridge D	38 points

Division 3 aggregate

1	Dunolly A	64 points
2	Mandurang B	38 points
3	Eldorado B	26 points

RURAL JUNIOR

11-13 years aggregate

1	Napoleons-Enfield A	52 points
2	Ascot & District A	44 points
3	Beazleys Bridge A	20 points

11-15 years aggregate

1	Napoleons-Enfield A	80 points
2	Beazleys Bridge A	36 points
3	Springhurst A	20 points

Champion team

1	Napoleons-Enfield A	132 points
2	Beazleys Bridge A	56 points
3	Ascot & District A	44 points

Succession planning in brigades

The Succession Planning Framework (SPF), developed by the Volunteer Sustainability Team (VST) and North West Region, is easy for brigades to access and use. It includes a range of resources and example templates that can be adapted to meet the needs of brigades and groups in all classifications.

The templates can be used just to generate ideas or can be downloaded and edited to suit individual needs. They support CFA members to take on leadership or other key roles in brigades or groups by guiding them through these six foundational areas:

- Structure review
- Skills review
- Membership and role review
- Developing our members
- Retaining and recruiting members
- Electing your teams.

The SPF acknowledges that succession planning may be different for every brigade and group, and brigades should determine the best approach for them to meet local needs. A brigade can work through all six sections of the framework or just a few.

Brigades and groups can use the framework independently or through facilitated support from catchment teams and VST; the Succession Planning Support Team facilitates brigade and group information sessions and workshops across the state.

During the framework's development, there was significant consultation with volunteers and staff. VST used a co-design model where brigades and groups had an important role in developing some of the resources. Many resources have been evaluated by brigades and groups and refined over time.

The SFP resources are becoming popular – an evaluation in September 2022 found there had been almost 9,000 visits to the website and all resources had been viewed and downloaded.

Search 'succession planning' on Members Online to access the framework. If you have any questions or feedback email successionplanning@cfa.vic.gov.au



Red Cliffs Fire Brigade

Red Cliffs Fire Brigade is making strides to empower its members and grow the brigade by embracing the CFA Succession Planning Framework. Captain Mathew Maher said members wanted to implement a succession plan about two years ago to strengthen the brigade for years ahead.

"We've identified necessary priorities to help secure growth in the brigade," Mathew said.

The brigade has removed the conventional military-style ranking associated with members' roles and instead allocated each member with a clearly outlined portfolio that is reassigned at each brigade election.

"We found that people were treating the 1st, 2nd and 3rd lieutenant positions as next in line with differing levels of authority. But we want these positions to be allocated to important officer roles such as safety, communications, operations and training.

"Each of these portfolios is vital to the functioning of the brigade and with this structure we allow members to have a go at the role they want to perform.

"As captain, when I need someone to deputise I can delegate responsibilities to any of these members in leadership positions, rather than defaulting to 1st lieutenant."

The brigade has also implemented guidelines around how often certain members attend meetings, training and community events.

"We're asking our members to attend more than six meetings per year and active firefighters to attend six to 10 training sessions per year," Mathew said. "This is about keeping people engaged and keeping our members safe. Making sure their skills are up to date and they are exposed to the latest safety messaging.

"This sort of succession planning builds resilience and lays out a plan for the brigade into the future."

The brigade also has a strong crop of up-and-coming firefighters in its Juniors program.

"Our Junior membership has been great with lots of Juniors moving through to the senior ranks. We have a really solid, hands-on program for our Juniors and it's making a significant difference to our future."

STORY MITCH GASTIN

Officer Fire Brigade

Succession planning is a vital aspect for any brigade, especially as the community across the state grows and changes. Officer Fire Brigade Captain Robert McCandless said this has been particularly true for his brigade as the once rural area has become more residential in recent years.

“Officer’s community is becoming more and more diverse and with new members come new skill sets,” Robert said. “I think it’s important to acknowledge these and use them to support brigade activities.”

After attending the Succession Planning Framework training as part of his mentor program, Robert said he had been largely focused on the retention and recruitment aspects of succession planning.

“I noticed that each year we would gain about three new members but two years later only one would still be with the brigade if we were lucky,” he said.

“The focus is not only on increasing brigade numbers but on increasing overall brigade morale and commitment. We’re building an office space so people who work from home have the opportunity to work from the station. This will improve the social aspect and help improve turnout times.

“And hopefully we’ll soon have the Juniors program back up and running which will help introduce the next generation to firefighting so they’ll join a brigade in the future.”

Another change introduced by Robert is the way duty crews work. At Officer brigade the members are divided into groups and work with a lieutenant to assist with the tasks of that portfolio.

“These groups are rotated on a regular basis so that all brigade members get a taste of each portfolio,” he said. “This helps people identify an area they are interested in and maybe even a role they want to put their hand up for at the next election.

Lakes Entrance Fire Brigade

Lakes Entrance Fire Brigade has recently seen significant growth and much needed change, and Captain Phil Loukes (pictured) has been the driving force behind the transformation.

Inclusiveness within the brigade is the centrepiece of its CFA Succession Planning Framework, aiming to formulate an inviting culture that thrives on giving people opportunities.

“Like any organisation you need to build in openness, fairness and transparency,” Phil said.

After 52 years in CFA and with a strong passion for people, Phil refocused the brigade management team meetings to have an open chair policy, allowing difficult conversations and concerns to be raised.

“I also got approval to create a 5th lieutenant position to appoint a young emerging leader within our BMT,” he said. “Additionally, we’ve strengthened our size and diversity. We have really strong brigade contributors from the LGBTQIA+ community and I’ve really pushed to upskill our members in that space.”

Before each BMT meeting, Phil does a welfare check with his members and when new members join the brigade he discovers what they’re most interested in.

“People used to say, ‘Oh yeah, I’m OK’, but now we’ve got people openly and honestly admitting when they’re not travelling all that well, have issues at work or in their relationship, etc, so we say go home and look after yourself.

“With new members, I want to know their gifts, abilities and aspirations so we can try to sew that into a CFA context and attempt to get the best out of them.”



“It also gives members the ability to identify another member they think would be good in a position and encourage them to go for it.”

At Officer brigade involvement of long-term existing members is also important.

“We have our older members help deliver training sessions and drills and where possible more experienced members are teamed up with newer members when responding to an incident,” he said. “That way they can help build the confidence of new members and remind them that they know what they are doing.”

In the time Robert has been captain at Officer brigade and implementing these changes, there has been a significant increase in the number of brigade members as well positive changes in the brigade’s turnouts, training and involvement in community events.

STORY ERIN BULMER

The process of electing teams and leadership has been a strong focus, removing carpark conversations and mates banding together to nominate each other.

“We now have signed nomination forms by all involved and once finalised and posted, nominees explain to us why they would be the most suitable for that role,” Phil said.

Action reviews and debriefs are now non-negotiable, so the brigade can learn from things that went well and identify what needs improving.

“I believe in learning on the job and navigating that with support. We empower people to take on the responsibility of leadership – as long as they’re not out of their depth.”

STORY LUCY BISHOP



Firefighters battle Flowerdale blaze



Hundreds of firefighters from across the state battled an aggressive grass and bushfire for 13 days in Flowerdale in late February. The fire, which burnt more than 1,000 hectares, which was believed to have been started by sparks from an angle grinder.

Before Yea Group Officer David Webb Ware received the first page for the Flowerdale fire, he already had concerns for the day ahead. David was not alone. District 12 had already marked the day with a 'hot day response' given the strong, south-westerly winds and temperatures forecast for the day, coupled with high fuel loads in the area.

"Usually the hills are quite bare at this time of year, but they were covered in grass from the wet spring we'd had, so the potential for fire spread in the hills was huge," David said.

As the pager went off and David was jumping in the Glenburn FCV, the Yea tanker had turned out and radioed back to 'make tankers 10'. An Advice message was issued soon after because of the thick grey smoke visible from afar.

Within seven minutes, this initial Advice message was upgraded to a Watch and Act. When he arrived on the southern side of the fireground, David requested additional support from Forest Fire Management Victoria crews along with one of its dozers and the District 12 Headquarters Brigade rehab unit. This was going to be a big fire.

"It was concerning because it was running straight up the side of the hill and I estimated it was already in excess of 100 hectares. It was a very aggressive fire," David said.

"One of our biggest concerns was what would happen if it got over the top of the Yea spur, which is a long, steep ridge with bush on one side and grassland on the other. If it got in there, it would have been hard to control."

David praised the use of specialised vehicles during the protracted incident.

"The field operations vehicle [FOV] was invaluable. We were able to use data from the aerial line scanners in conjunction with the resource tracking system to advise ground crews exactly where the edge of the fire was."

Less than a week after the Flowerdale fire was contained and deemed under control, David used this knowledge when the 150-hectare Maintongoon fire broke out near Bonnie Doon.

"I've never had the opportunity to work from an FOV before, so using the FOV at Flowerdale made it much easier to use the Wangaratta mobile command vehicle, also known as the Red Bus, at the Maintongoon fire a few days later," David said.

In addition to the use of these specialised vehicles, David said the highpoint of controlling this incident was the formation of strike teams with first-attack appliances.

"We had more than 20 first-attack appliances, so the sector commanders arranged these appliances into a strike team management structure," David explained.

"This form-up was the finest example I've ever seen of rounding up first-attack tankers and crews.

"Most of these appliances didn't even see a flame on that first night, but if the fire had spotted over the hill we would've faced all sorts of issues as there were a number of houses around the foot of the hill.

"The FFMVic crews on the ground used their expertise to construct containment lines and where deemed necessary, undertook burning-out activities."

David said all these factors led to a successful outcome for everyone involved.

"This was an outstanding outcome given the inaccessible terrain and difficult conditions crews faced."

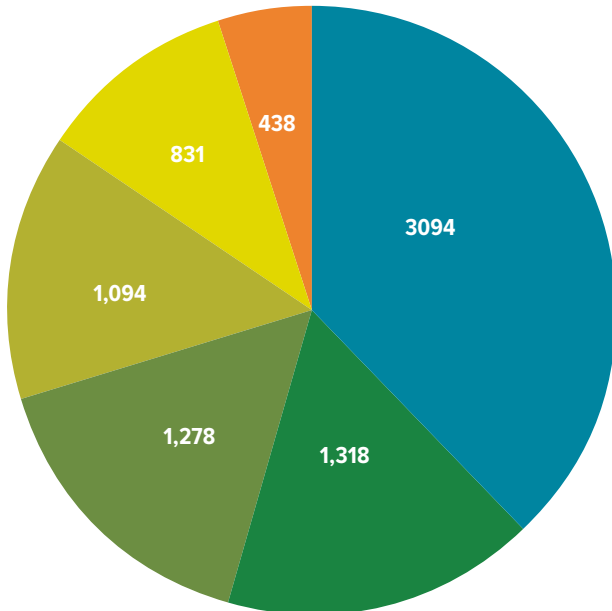


STORY NAOMI GALVIN

Incident statistics

1 October 2022 – 31 December 2022

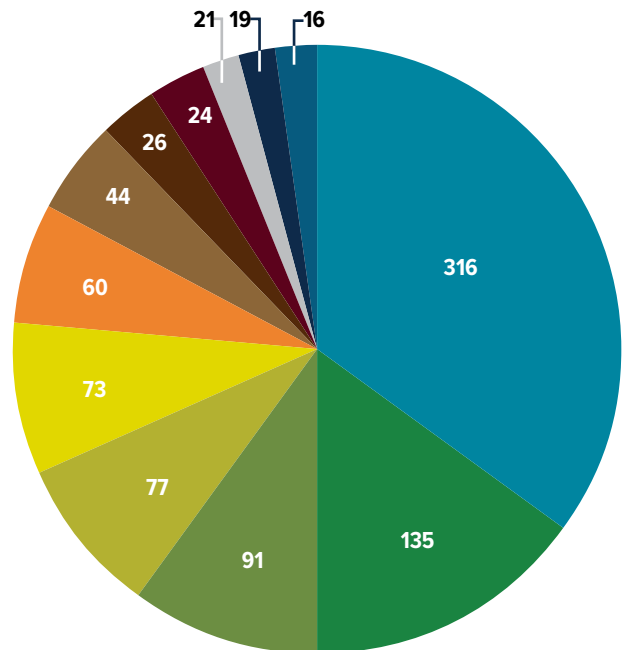
INCIDENTS BY TYPE



Service calls*	
Motor vehicle accidents/rescue/EMS calls	
Fire and explosions	
False alarms/false calls	
Good intent calls	
Hazardous condition	

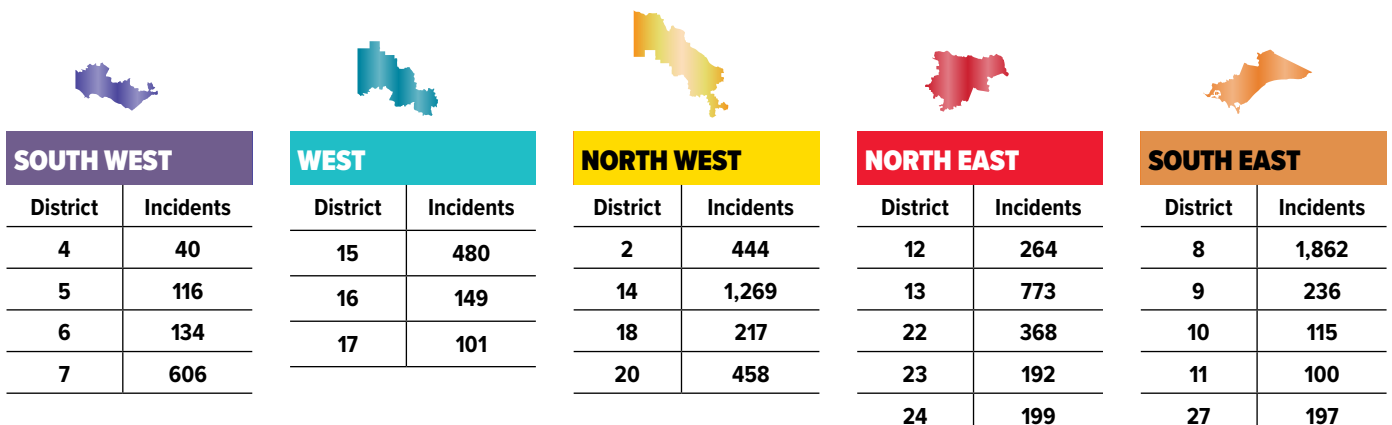
* Includes 2,118 callouts supporting FRV and 2 supporting other agencies

ORIGIN OF FIRE



Paddock/open area/lawn	
Engine area/running gear/vehicle wheel	
Undetermined	
Kitchen/cooking area	
Scrub/bush area	
Part of vehicle	
Rubbish area/rubbish bin	
Garage/carport	
Balcony/porch/verandah	
Crops	
Bedroom	
Lounge	

INCIDENTS BY DISTRICT



New weather stations boost fire predictions



CFA has purchased 10 new automated weather stations to improve Victoria's fire weather observations. This will generate more accurate fire spread predictions and community warnings.

The seven portable automated weather stations (PAWS) are standalone units that measure surrounding weather and transmit the data to CFA and the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM). This equipment, which can be set up in 15 minutes, can record temperature, relative humidity, wind speed and direction, rain, solar radiation and more. The data is transmitted remotely using either 3G or satellite iridium technology.

The portable stations are commonly used to help firefighters understand fire behaviour on the ground by deploying the PAWS during a fire incident or measuring the weather conditions of an area in the lead-up to elevated fire danger days, as well as before and during planned burns. They are placed in remote regions where there are no permanent weather stations to provide reliable and accurate weather data.

The three remote automated weather stations (RAWS) are permanently installed units used extensively in fire management across the US, Canada and Australia. One was installed at Victorian Emergency Management Training Centre (VEMTC) Central Highlands at Ballan last year.

"The RAWS at Ballan will be invaluable, not just for fires and planned burns in the area, but also to support CFA's training at the VEMTC," Predictive Services Specialist Andy Ackland said. "Two more RAWS have been permanently installed at Trentham East and Glenburn. These are both high-risk bushfire areas and have significant gaps in weather observations.

"Once they are set up, the weather stations can transmit data via satellite direct to the BOM in as little as 10 minutes, and the data is then relayed back to the online platforms used by CFA and other agencies."



Hazelwood North Fire Brigade member Ray Beaton, who has used a PAWS, said they provide accurate weather at the fire front and are a great asset for incident controllers.

"They also act as a safety measure for firefighters so it's a great safety tool too," Ray said.

PAWS can be requested through district and state duty officers via the multi-agency State Resource Request system. CFA's Predictive Services team is currently rolling out the PAWS and training to CFA regions, having already run sessions in Hazelwood North, Horsham, Wycheproof and at the Elmore Field Days.

Data from CFA's weather stations can be viewed on the BOM website on the 'Latest weather observations for Victoria' page: bom.gov.au/vic/observations/vicall.shtml

The weather stations were purchased thanks to funding from the Victorian Government. They will be used by the fire and emergency management sector in Victoria.

STORY ANDY ACKLAND



Let's get physical

Creating a healthy routine that includes physical activity is a great way to improve your sleep and decrease your risk of developing chronic disease.

Choose a form of exercise you enjoy such as running, weightlifting, yoga or a team sport. You can also increase your incidental activity by parking further away from your destination and walking or using the stairs instead of the lift.

Get Active Victoria (getactive.vic.gov.au/resources/5-golden-rules-to-increase-activity) has created five golden rules.

1. Take it slowly – don't jump in too fast.
2. Think long term.
3. Don't forget about incidental activity.
4. Do things you enjoy and get support from others.
5. Plan for activity.

Many CFA members are currently taking part in 'Active April'. This challenge helps people increase their physical activity levels and develop ongoing healthy and sustainable habits such as minimising the amount of time spent in prolonged sitting and being active on preferably all days, every week. For more

information go to members.cfa.vic.gov.au/programs/health-services/health-promotion/cfa-health-challenges

CFA has a range of programs to help members improve and maintain their health and wellbeing and prevent and manage disease and illness. Health programs, which can be booked by brigades and other CFA locations for on-site delivery, include Healthwatch (for brigades), Health Ready (for staffed locations) and Roadworthy for Life (district mechanical officers).

Sessions focus on heart health checks, take about 15 minutes per person and empower you to take action to protect your heart and minimise the risk of disease. Sessions are personalised, free and confidential (individual results are not retained by CFA) and are conducted by qualified health professionals.

Individual health checks can also be paired with group educational sessions and other health promotional activities on a variety of topics including healthy eating, physical activity and fatigue prevention and management.

For more information about what's offered by CFA Health Services, go to members.cfa.vic.gov.au/programs/health-services or email healthservices@cfa.vic.gov.au

Creating safe and respectful work environments

CFA is committed to fostering an environment where all CFA members are treated with dignity and respect, free from discrimination, harassment, bullying and violence. Everyone has the right to be and feel safe. It's everyone's responsibility to help prevent inappropriate and negative behaviours in the workplace and we all have a role to ensure CFA is a great place to volunteer and work. This includes feeling psychologically safe to be themselves, contribute and speak up.

Creating a psychologically safe work environment allows members to speak up, share ideas, ask questions, raise concerns, solicit feedback and make mistakes without being embarrassed, rejected or punished. An inclusive CFA for our volunteers and staff is critical to ensure everyone's safety.

We expect to be part of a culture where everyone feels safe, respected and empowered to undertake their roles. This includes demonstrating the required standards of behaviour, respectfully calling out unacceptable behaviour and supporting the effective resolution of issues in a way that supports a culture of care.

Everyone is encouraged to raise a concern or make a complaint in accordance with the CFA Complaint Resolution Guidelines – see members.cfa.vic.gov.au/programs/behavioural-standards/

behaviour-and-issue-resolution-at-cfa. Where possible local resolution is preferred, but sometimes this can feel tricky and confronting in our personal lives and with others in the CFA working environment. Here are some tips about how you might have the conversation with someone:

- Be specific and direct – be clear about the message you want to convey.
- Be respectful in your language and approach.
- Remain non-judgemental – avoid making it personal.
- Be curious and actively listen when the other person speaks.
- Speak from your perspective – use 'I' statements, rather than 'you'.
- Find a confidential place to have the discussion.

You can contact your local HR business partner for help and support. You can also call our Member Assistance Program on 1800 959 232 to access the Conflict Assist service. Through this service you can talk to a wellbeing consultant about strategies and tools and receive coaching on ways to deal with difficult workplace and personal situations and ways to avoid conflict.

STORY NICOLE FAUVRELLE

Our new MEUs take to the road

From Phillip Island to the Murray River and many places in between, CFA's new fleet of eight Mobile Engagement Units (MEUs) have been busy helping CFA members to meet the community. Assisting with flood recovery in the north-west, to informing tourists about fire safety along the Great Ocean Road, CFA members have immediately put the MEUs into action.

The MEUs have their own independent power source, so can operate just about anywhere, and in the first month of summer our members put that to the test.

Based on a Ford Transit, the MEU is designed to stand out at a community event or field day. The design is intentionally different to our fire trucks and corporate vehicles because the MEU has a different role.

The MEUs can be used to engage community members about a range of topics including recruitment and fundraising, and information about upcoming fuel reduction works or fire safety.

Koondrook Fire Brigade recently held a community 'thank you' day in response to the recent flood events, and Koondrook brigade captain Ben Watts (pictured) was pleased to use one of the MEUs.

"We were lucky enough to secure the North West MEU for its first-ever public outing and it proved to be a drawcard at getting the attention of members of the public," Ben said. "We had lots of positive conversations and gave out community information.

"I especially liked being able to play our own tailored media and recruitment video through the TV. Also, the power is fully self-contained which meant we could park it where we would get the best volume of passing traffic – we weren't constrained by where we could plug into 240 volts."

The new vans are more practical than the two large bus-sized MEUs CFA had in the past, which could be operated by only a few people and were too large for certain situations. Having the eight regionally-based MEUs also means more members will be able to attend local events in more places.

With the solar system equipment plugged in and the equipment on standby ready to go, the MEUs can be set up and packed away in minutes. The 200amp/hour battery will hold enough power supply to run the inbuilt equipment for several hours, and the solar panels will generate power to recharge the battery. There is no need to carry fuel, no setting up a generator and, importantly when you are talking with people, no noise.

The vehicle can be driven on a standard car licence. It is diesel powered with an automatic gearbox and a similar length to a dual cab ute. No formal training is needed before using an MEU – region staff will show how it works when you collect the unit. All CFA members can request to use an MEU. A booking request system is available through Members Online. Go to members.cfa.vic.gov.au/brigades-operational/mobile-engagement-units/how-to-request

Community generosity after the 2019-20 Black Summer fire campaign provided CFA with the funds to develop and maintain these eight new resources.

If you plan to attend a community event, think about how much better it could be by using an MEU.

STORY CRAIG HEARSON



PHOTO: CHLOE WATTS

Hoppers Crossing tests new pumper tanker

Hoppers Crossing Fire Brigade will soon be sporting some shiny new wheels – putting the new prototype pumper tanker to the test over the next 12 months.

Funded through the State Government Volunteer Support Package, the next generation \$800,000 pumper tanker will receive important feedback from CFA's Hoppers Crossing members during its trial period as it becomes their primary truck, replacing their previous pumper tanker.

The new prototype pumper tanker has new and improved features including an auto tank fill system, touch screen controls, hydraulically-driven pump, an electronic message board, battery-operated tools and a thermal imaging camera mounted on the bull bar with a display inside the cabin.

Head of Fleet and Protective Equipment Danny Jones said pumper tankers provide CFA firefighters with a dual option that allows static water pumping or the use of a water tank on the truck.

"These trucks are best placed in urban settings where the risk is predominantly structural, but also with a rural interface where it provides firefighters some capability to fight grass and scrub fires too," Danny said.

"It's also a great truck to use for asset protection as part of a task force deployment."

Hoppers Crossing Captain Paul Dimartino said the brigade did some training on the new pumper tanker before it was sent off for its final service and he was impressed by its new features.

"The new pumper tanker has a 3,000-litre water tank which is more than our previous truck which held 2,000 litres. This will give us more capacity when fighting grassfires on the outskirts of town," Paul said.

"The pump operation is also a lot easier to work with and the auto tank fill system is great to use.

"We look forward to exploring its features further and putting it to the real test next fire season."

The pumper tanker also has Class B and Class A foam capability and a 2,500 litre per minute water pump.

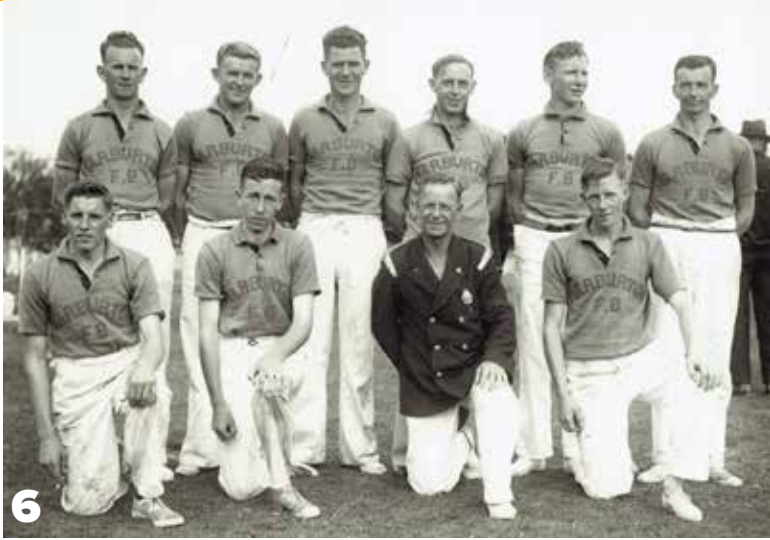
CFA currently has 42 pumper tankers in its fleet. After the next generation pumper tanker has been used for 12 months, CFA will review the specifications and consider the next steps for future trucks of this type.

STORY AMY SCHILDBERGER



Warburton Fire Brigade





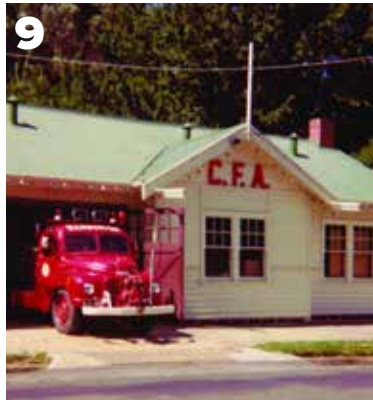
6



7



8



9



10



11



12

- 1 Current fire station. Photo Tim Herbert
- 2 Rural practice in Clarke Avenue, 1960s. Photo Brenda Parkinson
- 3 Brigade members and rotunda station, 1915
- 4 Ash Wednesday, 1983. Photo Edwin Start
- 5 Captain Len Lay and community members in front of station, 1970s
- 6 Early competition team
- 7 Brigade Communications Officer (1958-1989) Coral Borgas BEM
- 8 2019 River Lights Festival. Photo Suzanne Phoenix
- 9 Fire station, 1932
- 10 DA Dodge pumper, 1946
- 11 Upper Yarra strike team, 1991. Photo Bill Williams
- 12 East Warburton Auxiliary group, 1980s

COMPILED BY KEITH PAKENHAM AFISM

Emergency Memberlink

The Emergency Memberlink program is a way for to recognise your commitment and contribution to emergency services and Victorian communities.

By using Emergency Memberlink, you can receive discounts benefits on a wide range of products and services in Victoria and interstate.

Details of the offers and full terms and conditions are at emergencymemberlink.com.au.

To join Memberlink phone 1800 820 037 or register online at emergencymemberlink.com.au. You can also access your Memberlink card on the website.

The Memberlink team welcomes feedback about the program and your suggestions about new benefits you think would be of value to you, your family and your colleagues. Phone the team or leave a message on the Emergency Memberlink Facebook page.



- Exclusive discounts on home entertainment, audio, TVs, mobile phones, IT hardware, fitness trackers and whitegoods through the **JB Hi-Fi Corporate Benefits Programme**.
- **Westfund Health Insurance** offers a 5% discount plus two-month waiting periods waived on your Extras cover.
- Up to 10% off year-round, plus additional savings during promotional periods on **Dell Technologies** laptops, desktops, monitors, printers and accessories.
- \$50.00 off the already discounted price on a **Driver Dynamics** Defensive Driving Course.
- Corporate pricing on new vehicles at **Rex Gorrell Geelong**.
- Discount of up to 30% on standard room only and bed & breakfast rates at **Radisson on Flagstaff Gardens Melbourne**.
- The **Bridgestone Business Associates Program** has 15% off Bridgestone's website price on the full range of car, SUV and light van tyres.
- Discounts throughout the year at **Specsavers Optometrists**.
- **SPC-The Good Meal Co** has a 20% discount on tasty home delivered meals.
- 30% discount on **pierre cardin** handbags, wallets, luggage and travel accessories.
- **Sixt Australia** has up to 20% off the best rate of the day on passenger and commercial vehicles.
- Save 3% to 7% on pre-purchased **Gift Cards** including Woolworths, WISH, Coles, Myer, Kmart, Target, Rebel Sport, JB Hi-Fi, The Good Guys, BCF, Freedom and Hello Fresh.
- Special hotel accommodation rates throughout Australia and internationally with **Hotel Planner**.
- **Experience Oz** has at least 10% off hot deals on a range of experiences such as attractions, zoos and aquariums, theme parks and extreme activities.
- 4% discount on the Emergency Memberlink Health Plan through **Bupa**.
- Two months free for pets aged 6-52 weeks, one month free for pets aged at least one year, and 6% off annual premiums through **PetsOnMe Insurance**.
- Commercial pricing on a range of household appliances and electronics through **The Good Guys Commercial Division**.
- 25% off revitalise Bath House bathing and Moonlit bathing during off-peak periods (Mon-Fri outside of public and school holidays) at **Peninsula Hot Springs** on the Mornington Peninsula.
- **mycar Tyre & Auto** offers 10% off servicing, mechanical repairs and TCP tyre purchases.
- 20% off flowers from **Petals Network**.
- Discounted cinema tickets, attraction tickets and e-gift cards through the **Memberlink Box Office**.
- 15% off prescription glasses and prescription sunglasses at **OPSM**.
- **RSEA Safety** has 15% off full-priced items online and instore.
- 10% off Australian car rentals with **Budget**.
- Save up to 40% off the Hewlett-Packard public store prices of laptops, desktops, monitors, printers and accessories through the **HP Corporate Store**.
- Travel with **Spirit of Tasmania** and save 5% on adult Spirit and Flexi passenger fares.
- Access to **Nissan Fleet** pricing and benefits across a range of new Nissan vehicles.
- 5% to 10% off the best unrestricted rate of the day at **Accor Hotels**.
- Plants, trees and garden products at wholesale prices at **Plantmark**.
- **Searoad Ferries** offers 10% discount on ferry travel between Sorrento and Queenscliff.
- Exclusive pricing on whitegoods, kitchen appliances, audio visual, computers and mobile phones, home appliances and furniture through **Harvey Norman Groups & Associations Division**.
- Preferential government accommodation rates at **Choice Hotels Asia-Pac** across Australia.
- **Infinity Celebrancy** has a 30% discount on all celebrancy services including weddings, funerals and other life events.
- Up to 20% discount on the public web price of **Lenovo** Notebook and desktop PCs, monitors and accessories.



Brigade

If undeliverable return to:
D&D Mailing Services
6/400 Princes Hwy
NOBLE PARK NORTH VIC 3174

PRINT
POST
100010934

POSTAGE
PAID
AUSTRALIA