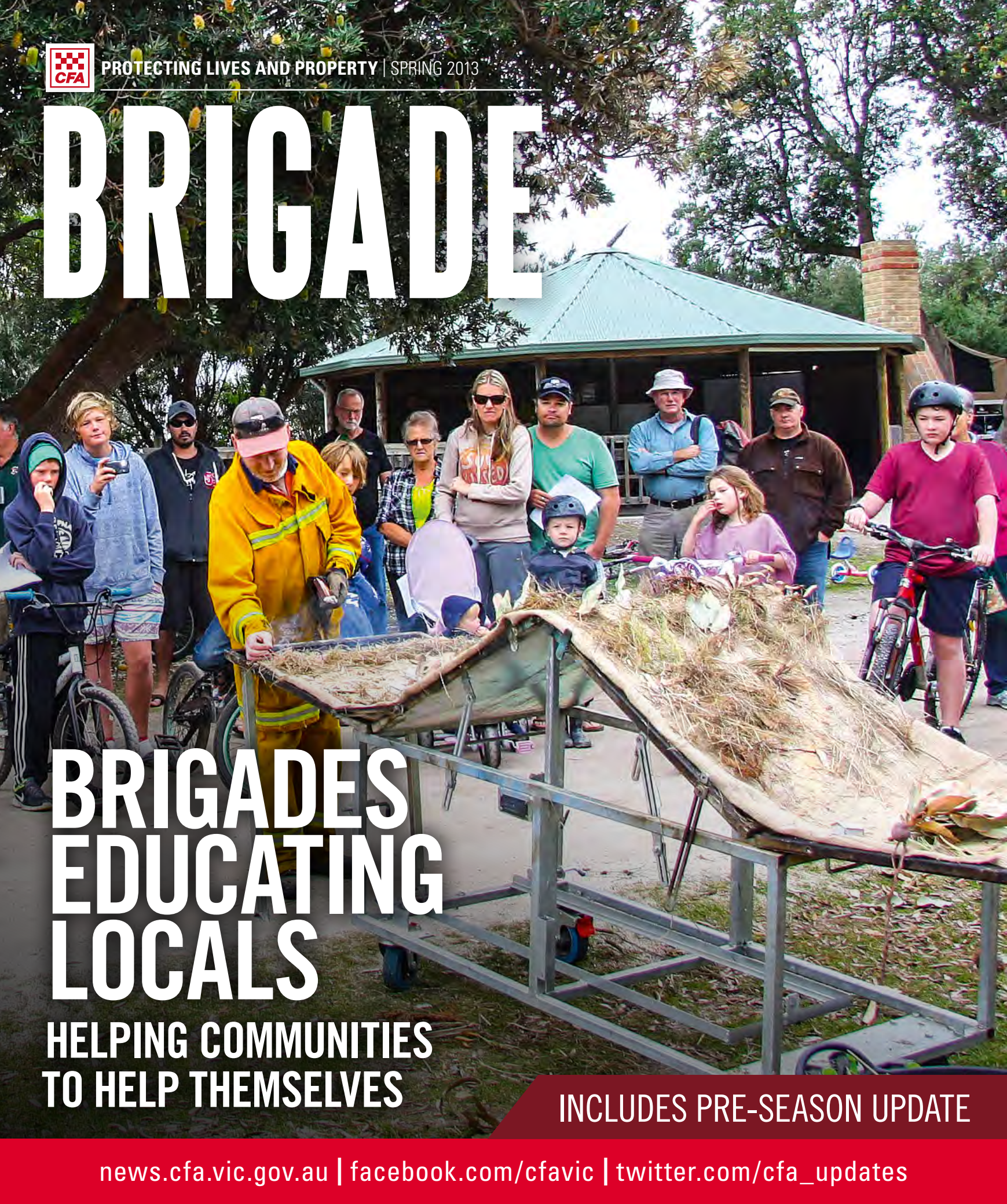




PROTECTING LIVES AND PROPERTY | SPRING 2013

BRIGADE



BRIGADES EDUCATING LOCALS

HELPING COMMUNITIES
TO HELP THEMSELVES

INCLUDES PRE-SEASON UPDATE

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CLAIRE HIGGINS ACTING CHAIR

TAKE CARE WHEN DRIVING

The Health, Safety and Environment Committee of the Board has recently discussed the high risks faced by our people when driving our vehicles. At Board level, we are particularly interested in, and concerned about, the number of accidents and injuries to our people while driving.

From July 2012 to June 2013, our brigades turned out 85,236 times driving some of CFA's 3,200 vehicles. It's not just the incident itself that can spell danger, but the everyday act of getting on the road alongside a population with varying driving abilities. The skill levels of our own drivers also vary.

Operations managers and officers in charge must ensure that each brigade has enough people qualified to drive brigade vehicles. Directors and executive managers must ensure that their staff members drive in accordance with state legislation, CFA standing orders, standard operating procedures and policies. Vehicles must also operate within occupational health and safety guidelines.

Since 1945 when CFA was established, 24 vehicle incidents have led to the death of a firefighter. In fact, vehicle incidents are responsible for a quarter of all firefighter fatalities.

CFA currently averages three significant vehicle incidents a year. Collision and incident statistics for the financial year 2009-10 show there were 200 claims of more than \$500 made. This figure has increased at about 7 per cent a year over the past four years.

Since 1991, CFA vehicles have been involved in collisions which have led to the death of five civilian drivers or passengers.

CFA has found that the most common cause of vehicle incidents is members not understanding or complying with the road rules and/or the

Chief Officer's standard operating procedures. The other common cause is CFA members driving unfamiliar vehicles – especially at campaign fires – or not having the right training to drive in challenging terrain.

To improve member safety on and off-road, the CFA Driver Education Strategy is currently being considered by the Chief Officer, and more off-road driver training areas are being developed across Victoria.

While anti-lock braking (ABS) and electronic stability control (ESC) are in some new CFA vehicles, other passive and active safety systems in passenger vehicles are not readily available for use in CFA heavy vehicles.

However, CFA is one of many large-fleet organisations looking at innovative engineering systems that may prevent vehicle collisions.

Small video cameras record both the forward-facing view and the driver. In addition to video, these devices provide GPS location, vehicle speed, 'g' forces and time and date.

Black box data recorders are now standard in all cars built since 2005 and some new CFA heavy vehicles. These devices record all actions including gear selection, whether brakes were applied, signals used, whether headlights were on and whether seatbelts were used. They can also warn drivers about fatigue and the requirement to take a rest break.

CFA is currently trialling early-warning rollover systems to provide drivers with an audible and visual warning when their vehicles are approaching cross slopes of 10 and 15 degrees.

However, even with improved training and improved vehicle technology, all CFA members who drive our vehicles need to be aware of the inherent risks and take care – and make sure they've had the appropriate training and have the right experience before getting behind the wheel.

Please drive carefully. It's core CFA business that every volunteer and staff member arrives home safely. ■



PHOTO: KETH PAKENHAM

CHANGES TO MINIMUM SKILLS TRAINING

STORY DARREN GREVIS-JAMES

Minimum Skills training is about to undergo a major change. This is a result of a Jones Inquiry recommendation that called for a comprehensive review of Minimum Skills training and a subsequent series of reviews done in consultation with Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria, training managers, instructors and brigades.

The review of Minimum Skills training was intended to determine whether current training practices met the changing operational needs of CFA – in particular, the need for brigades to have more input and the ability to train and sustain their operational firefighters.

Until now, Minimum Skills training primarily focused on operational firefighters learning the fundamentals of bushfire firefighting techniques, the operation of equipment and safety procedures.

In future, CFA intends to take an 'all hazards' approach to Minimum Skills.

This means the basic skills taught to new firefighters will focus on the skills needed to respond to any local incident.

Operational Training and Volunteerism Executive Director Lex de Man said the 'all hazards' approach to training will be consistent with the needs and risks faced by each brigade in their local area. "There'll be greater focus on members' basic firemanship skills that will allow them – under supervision and effective leadership – to respond and add value as part of a crew when responding to any local incident.

"Not only will it be a more focused training program in future, but it also means getting new members on to a truck during their training program rather than at the end of it." A significant amount of work now needs to be done before the new program is introduced after 1 July 2014. ■

Above: New firefighters will experience a wider range of incidents while training

FIRE AWARENESS AWARDS

STORY ANN MOODIE

The 2013 Fire Awareness Awards are now open for entries from anyone involved in projects that reduce the number or impact of fires in Victoria. The awards are a great opportunity to share your expertise, be recognised and to receive funding for your project.

Projects can focus on any type of fire, including structure fires and bushfires. The awards acknowledge projects that cover fire preparedness, fire safety, fire awareness, fire prevention, fire response and recovery after fire.

RACV Insurance is a proud, long-term sponsor of the Fire Awareness Awards, which aim to raise community awareness and educate the community about fire prevention. ABC Local Radio Victoria will once again provide media support for the awards.

You can nominate your completed project for one of 12 awards, from which an overall winner will be presented with the RACV Insurance Award for Excellence.

If you have a great idea that needs funding to get started, or you require financial support to complete your project, you can apply for the \$10,000 RACV Insurance Fire Innovation grant or a Special Incentive grant of up to \$2,000. ■

For more information or to enter your project, go to fireawarenessawards.com.au



READ BRIGADE MAGAZINE ONLINE

By switching to the digital version of *Brigade* magazine instead of receiving it in the post, you'll get access to a range of interactive features that we'll introduce over the next few issues. You will also help CFA to reduce its environmental impact.

You can sign up by visiting the intranet or Brigades Online and clicking on the 'Manage subscriptions' link. By selecting the 'Receive electronic copy via email' option, your paper copy will be cancelled and you'll automatically receive an

email alert when a new electronic *Brigade* magazine is available, plus a link to take you straight to it.

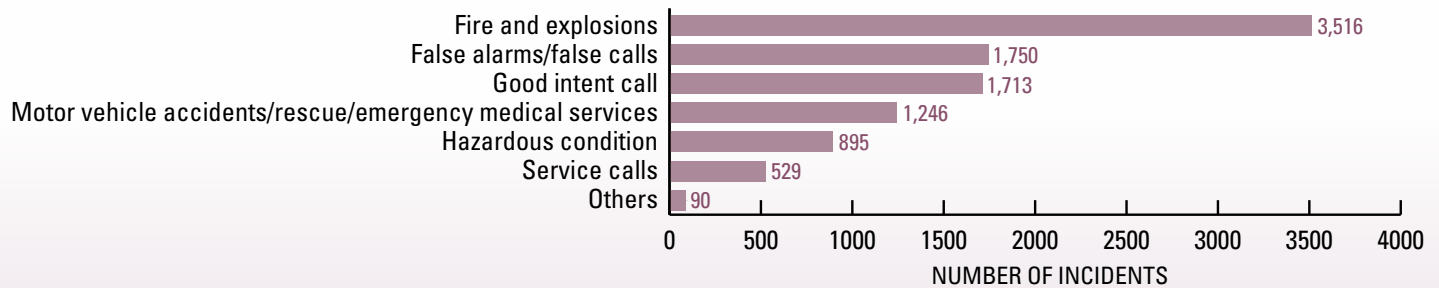
Please make sure that your personal details on the intranet or Brigades Online include your current email address.

Rest assured, we'll continue to print *Brigade* magazine for those who prefer paper or who can't access the internet. ■

INCIDENT SUMMARY

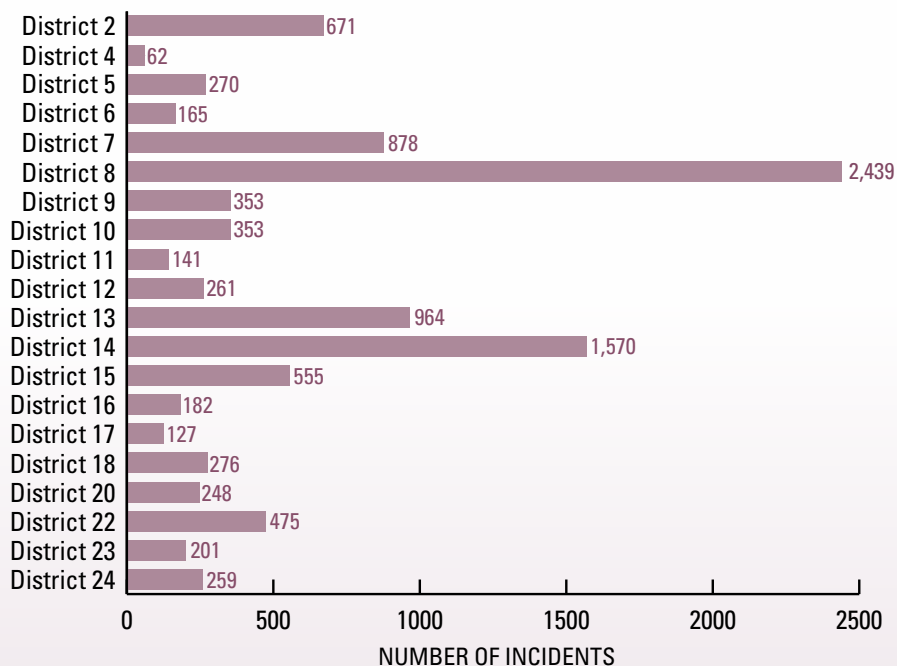
STATEWIDE INCIDENTS BY TYPE

1 APRIL-30 JUNE 2013



STATEWIDE INCIDENTS BY DISTRICT

1 APRIL-30 JUNE 2013



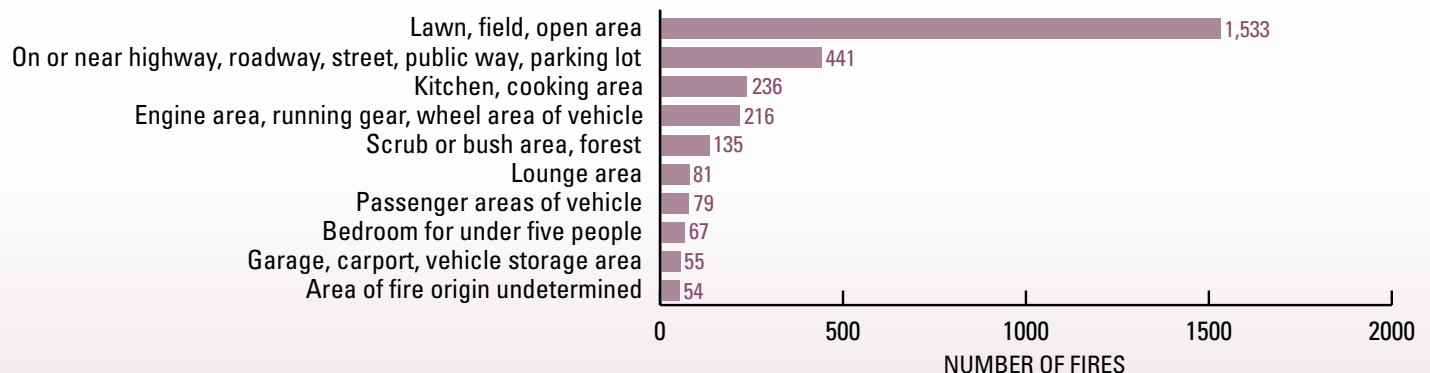
Brigades are reminded to submit their fire/incident report as soon as possible after attending an incident.

Brigades on strike teams also need to submit a report.

FIRS Call Centre,
1800 628 844, is open
daily 8am-11pm.

ORIGIN OF FIRE

1 APRIL-30 JUNE 2013



TANKER ROLLOVER AT TYABB

STORY AMY SCHILDBERGER



INCIDENT: Road accident

DISTRICT: 8

DATE: 11 July 2013

BRIGADES: Tyabb, Hastings, Dandenong, Bittern, Somerville, Mount Martha, Moorooduc



Left: Inside the mobile communications vehicle



Left below: Setting up air-monitoring equipment

More than 100 firefighters worked tirelessly for several days at the scene of a petrol tanker rollover in Tyabb.

CFA brigades were called to the incident on the corner of Frankston-Flinders Road and Westernport Highway just after 3pm, where the truck carrying 39,000 litres of unleaded petrol, ethanol and diesel, had tipped on to its side.

Firefighters used foam to prevent sparks from igniting the highly flammable fuel and the council provided soil to stop the fuel flowing into a nearby creek and drains.

Westernport Highway and Frankston-Flinders Road were closed throughout the incident, trains on the Stony Point line were stopped and Tyabb airport also suspended operations because of the hazardous risk.

Incident Controller Michael Willmott said firefighters worked throughout the night to ensure the safety of the public and those responsible for decanting the fuel from the tanker.

“Fortunately, the quick action by the first responding CFA crews from Tyabb and Hastings stopped the leak from entering the waterways and drains,” Michael said.

“The driver was also lucky to escape unharmed – especially with the high level of risk in this type of incident.”

An Advice Message was issued to alert the community of a hazardous materials incident in the area. CFA hazmat detection teams with specialist equipment were also at the scene to monitor flammable levels of vapours throughout the incident.

“When the vapour levels were reduced to a safe level, the truck was able to be rolled back on to its wheels and then towed away for assessment,” Michael said.

“We were lucky the weather conditions were favourable with very little wind. However, the cold conditions slowed the process of removing the spilt fuel from the road.”

At 11am the following day, the tanker was rolled upright and towed away.

“VicRoads then began assessing the damage to the roadways and started resurfacing works,” Michael said. ■

To see more images and video go to news.cfa.vic.gov.au/tyabb-tanker

RECYCLING FACTORY ABLAZE

STORY KEITH PAKENHAM

INCIDENT: Structure fire

DISTRICT: 8

DATE: 10 June 2013

BRIGADES: Dandenong, Frankston, Keysborough, Hallam, Springvale, Skye, Carrum Downs, Mount Eliza, Patterson River



Early in the morning on the Queen’s Birthday public holiday, brigades were called to a factory fire on Ordish Road, Dandenong South.

When the first trucks arrived, they found the Veolia Environmental Services warehouse fully alight. Incident Controller Adrian Devenish from Dandenong brigade organised the crews with an aggressive external attack. Dandenong ladder platform attacked the fire from above, while ground crews used quick cut saws to gain access to the factory and adjoining office building.

Frankston brigade’s Teleboom and breathing apparatus van and Patterson River brigade’s mobile communications vehicle were called to give support. In addition, the Narre Warren catering unit fed 50 firefighters at the scene.

A forklift truck and pieces of infrastructure were destroyed in the blaze, but firefighters confined it to the one building full of cardboard and other recyclable materials.

“It was quite a successful firefight,” said Adrian Devenish. “We made a good foundation for a good firefight and we held it quite well. No one was in the building at the time, so fortunately there were no injuries.”

According to fire investigator Michael Rowell, the origin of the fire was a load of waste paper delivered by a Veolia employer. Michael believes the load may have been smouldering on arrival and, after it was unloaded inside the transfer shed, it caught fire and spread due to the proximity of combustible material. ■

To see more images and video go to news.cfa.vic.gov.au/Veolia-factory



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

FIRE DESTROYS HOME IN THE HILLS

STORY AMY SCHILDBERGER

INCIDENT: Structure fire

DISTRICT: 13

DATE: 2 July 2013

BRIGADES: Kalorama and Mt Dandenong, Montrose, Olinda, Mooroolbark



PHOTO: AMY SCHILDBERGER

A man was lucky to escape from a fire that destroyed his Kalorama home. ACFA brigades were called to the incident on Mountain View Road just before 8pm and found the house fully alight.

Kalorama and Mount Dandenong brigade Captain Terry Quarrell said more than 40 firefighters did everything they could to salvage the single-storey house, but it was completely destroyed. The fire was thought to have been caused by an open fire.

“Unfortunately there wasn’t a great deal we could do apart from protect exposures and do a quick search for the resident, and at that stage we just needed to get a lot of resources up here and do what we could to suppress the fire,” he said.

Initially, there were fears for the welfare of the home owner, but he was found outside at the back of the property. He escaped with a minor cut to his arm and was taken to hospital for observation.

The fire was under control just before 8.45pm but crews remained at the scene for a further two hours undertaking suppression activities. ■

To see more images and video go to news.cfa.vic.gov.au/kalorama-house

PHOTO: COURTESY OF BORDER MAIL



AMMO ADDS BANG TO HOUSE FIRE

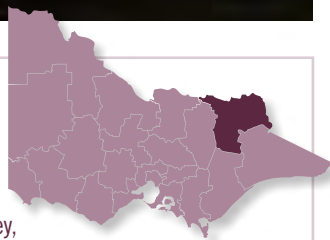
STORY SONIA MACLEAN

INCIDENT: Structure fire

DISTRICT: 24

DATE: 4 July 2013

BRIGADES: Barnawartha, Wodonga, Indigo Valley, Chiltern, Browns Plains, Cornishtown, Rutherglen



The town of Barnawartha, near Wodonga, experienced some unexpected fourth of July ‘fireworks’ when 5,000 rounds of ammunition exploded in a burning house on Bill Tanners Road.

First at the scene, at 5.45pm, were Barnawartha Captain Howard Smith and his wife Tammy, Deputy Communications Officer for Rutherglen Group, who were greeted by a “mighty glow”.

They called for more trucks and set up incident control and immediately established that no people were trapped inside the property. But the feeling of relief quickly turned to alarm when they started hearing a series of loud bangs, almost like gunshots.

“We quickly established that there were around 5,000 rounds of ammunition stored in the house,” said Tammy.

Under challenging circumstances, brigades did extremely well to bring the fire under control within three hours. It was declared safe at 9am the next morning.

“This incident had it all,” said Tammy. “We had members from Rutherglen, Barnie and Chiltern all donning breathing apparatus, with the number of cylinder refills taking up an entire A4 page in the records.

“But the biggest learning curve for us came out of the relay pumping. We set up two or three different hydrants around town, but kept losing water pressure. The mains in the town are a bit old and too much water was being pumped – we kept hearing ‘pressure down’. It was very logistical.

“The loss of the property was a tragedy for the resident, a member of the fire brigade, who has lived there his whole life.

“I cannot praise highly enough the efforts of the brigades, especially the guys who worked through the clean-up that morning which was a huge effort.

“We had 20 members from Barnie on the ground – plus any number of residents offering to help – and that’s an incredible effort for a small town.” ■

DUMPED DRUMS CAUSE HAZMAT INCIDENT

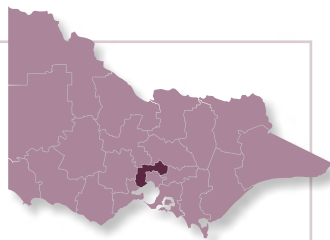
STORY BLAIR DELLEMIJN

INCIDENT: Hazmat incident

DISTRICT: 14

DATE: 21 June 2013

BRIGADES: Wollert, Craigieburn, Epping, South Morang



Wollert and Epping brigades were paged to investigate a report of dumped drums leaking on the side of Masons Road in Wollert. The drums were discovered by council staff from a local waste and recycling centre who regularly patrol Masons Road because they know it’s used by illegal dumpers.

When CFA crews arrived, they were faced with around 15 300-litre drums containing unknown liquids, and some were punctured and leaking on to the road. As a result, an exclusion zone was set up.

The Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) sent hazmat and breathing apparatus (BA) vehicles, and a decontamination area was set up. MFB Commander Steve Dorman and CFA Operations Officer Phil Peacock decided they needed more crews at the scene to wear splash and gas suits, so South Morang and Craigieburn brigades were called.

While suited-up firefighters took readings and samples of the liquid, CFA Scientific Officer Warren Glover was on hand to advise what the chemical could be and how the area should be decontaminated. Gas detection equipment was used, but no gas was found.

“The operation took about three hours. We had to follow standard operating procedures and a few safety procedures before we could gather information about the drums,” said Phil Peacock.

“One of the key things that made this so successful was the fantastic assistance from MFB who brought their hazmat and BA vehicles.

“Interoperability of the fire services, Whittlesea Council, Environment Protection Authority, police and Ambulance Victoria was first rate. It was an effective emergency team. We work hard year in, year out to build up that relationship.”

A sample of the liquid was sent to MFB’s Scientific Department at South Melbourne Fire Station for analysis. In the evening, it was confirmed that the drums contained paints and solvents and the City of Whittlesea arranged to remove the drums. ■



PHOTO: BLAIR DELLEMIJN

ARSON THREATENS GARDEN SUPPLIES

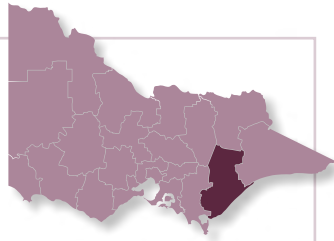
STORY JASON LEIGH

INCIDENT: Structure fire

DISTRICT: 10

DATE: 14 June 2013

BRIGADES: Churchill, Hazelwood North, Morwell, Newborough, Traralgon, Traralgon West, Yallourn North



CFA members in the La Trobe Valley were busy preparing for floods when the call came at 2am for a large, deliberately lit fire at the disused timber mill in Morwell, which was threatening the warehouse beside it.

Operations Officer and Incident Controller Paul Fixter said the mill and adjoining warehouse had recently been bought by local gardening supply company Pinegro, and millions of dollars worth of stock was being stored in the warehouse.

“The building was well alight when we arrived – flames were going absolutely everywhere. A good 70 metres was well alight on the western end, all the way to the roof,” said Paul.

“There was a lot of disused machinery inside as well as sawdust and coal dust from the power stations, which enhanced the fire activity. Flames were licking the large building next door which contained all the stock.”

There were 55 CFA members at the scene from seven brigades, plus Victoria Police.

At one stage there were five pumpers, five tankers, three support vehicles and the 42-metre ladder platform from Traralgon at the scene.

It was the largest single structure fire Paul had dealt with as an incident controller and, while the job went well, they had to deal with a number of big challenges.

“It was just one of those hard incidents. Because of the recent rainfall there was a foot of mud around the structure. Walking through mud for that many hours takes it out of everyone, and our crews had already been active during the floods – which made the workload pretty high for the night. It was a long night shift!

“Water supply was also a big issue. The hydrants were a fair way from the incident and we had a three-truck relay getting water to the job. We had to relay



PHOTO: PAUL FIXTER

through one pumper on to another pumper and keep boosting the pressure as we went to get a useable supply of water at the actual fire.

“Dealing with a large structure fire like that, I have to make sure I don’t exceed my span of control – I broke the incident into four sectors as well as a water sector. Each side had its own sector commander and I also had a dedicated water sector commander to look after our water supply.

“We saved the adjoining warehouse first as it contained millions of dollars worth of stock, and then stopped the fire throughout the 300-metre long building. The incident was under control within around 2.5 hours.

“The Traralgon ladder platform water monitor did a good job and we had 65mm hose lines stopping the fire. In the whole incident we used 48 hoses.

“It was a job really well done by all crews under extremely wet and muddy conditions. While it was a long night, it ran well, everyone got fed and was happy.

“We also had a new career firefighter on that night from Morwell – Peter Martin – who had only been in for a month or two. It was an eye opener for him and he went really well.”

Pinegro was very grateful to the fireys for saving the adjoining warehouse and all the stock. Although part of the disused mill needs rebuilding, the rest is still useable. ■

ROOFTOP KITTY CALAMITY

STORY ANDREA NISBET

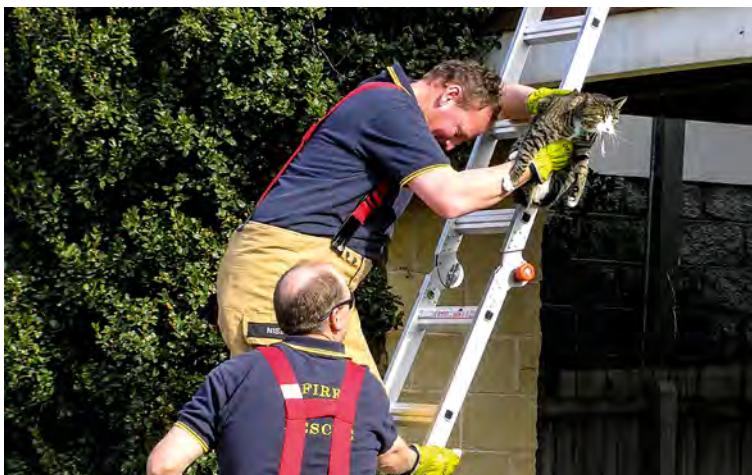


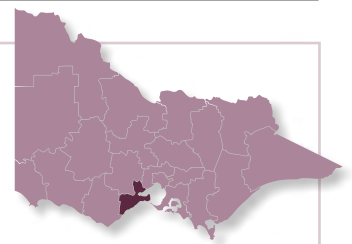
PHOTO: ANDREA NISBET

INCIDENT: Rescue

DISTRICT: 7

DATE: 15 July 2013

BRIGADES: Portarlinton



Another day in the life as a CFA volunteer saw members from the Portarlinton brigade undertake a dramatic rooftop rescue at Pigdon Street, Indented Head.

Around midday, a frantic call was made directly to the Portarlinton Fire Station by a local family concerned about the welfare of their pet cat. It was discovered on the roof of a neighbour’s two-storey house after being missing since the previous day. The cat was unable to climb down and in distress.

Following the call, Captain Darren Nisbet and his crew were greeted by the cat’s anxious owner, two-year-old Hilary, who led firefighters to the cat’s rooftop location.

With Hilary and her family at the scene, brigade members climbed on to the roof and coaxed the cat with some food before removing it from the roof.

Within half an hour, the uninjured cat was safely returned to the arms of grateful Hilary. ■

FISKVILLE UPDATE – INDEPENDENT MONITOR REPORTS

The Independent Monitor – Fiskville, Kieran Walshe, released his interim report in which he confirmed CFA's considerable progress in implementing the 10 recommendations from Professor Joy's report, as well as the additional 11 CFA management initiatives.

The interim report, released on 31 July, notes that the wide range of health and ecological assessments conducted by environmental engineering firm Cardno Lane Piper (CLP), in consultation with industry experts, is almost complete.

Reports around human health risk assessments are due in the coming months and a report on the findings of the Monash Health Study is expected in late 2014.

Work continues with the five-year voluntary health surveillance program, which offers a full medical examination, further annual medical assessments and a health questionnaire for anyone at high or medium risk of exposure as defined by Professor Joy. So far, 199 current and former members have taken up this offer and have registered.

The health surveillance program is still open. Anyone who has concerns should call the health and welfare hotline on 1800 628 616 or email fiskvilleprojectteam@cfa.vic.gov.au.

Draft reports into soil assessments, groundwater, buried drums and landfills have been provided to the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) statutory auditor for review prior to being finalised. A number of draft water-related reports are also being reviewed; more are expected to be delivered shortly by CLP.

The removal of electrical transformers from our training grounds, as well as the review of Fiskville Occupational Health and Safety procedures for fire training water, is now complete.

Environmental assessments of CFA regional training grounds also continue; draft reports from CLP are due later this year.

Of the 11 management initiatives, eight have been completed. We are working hard to implement AS4801 occupational health and safety (OHS) standards and ISO 14001 environmental standards at all training grounds. These are expected to take several years to complete.

The testing, reports and reviews of our work by independent bodies such as the EPA auditor will help CFA to determine a clear plan for further site works and upgrades, ensuring Fiskville complies with the highest possible environmental management and occupational health and safety standards.

All the critical assessments, remedial works, and new infrastructure, together with improvements to policy and procedures, will continue to be carried out in line with our planned implementation program. Our aim is to create one of the safest and most advanced fire and emergency training facilities in Australia.

In the meantime, Fiskville remains safe for staff, trainees and visitors and we continue to consult and work closely with WorkSafe and the EPA, ensuring safety is our number one priority.

The Independent Monitor's interim report is available online through CEO Mick Bourke's blog – Fiskville Update 32, at news.cfa.vic.gov.au/blog. ■

PROGRESS ON PROFESSOR JOY RECOMMENDATIONS AND CFA MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES (AS AT 1 AUGUST 2013)

Recommendation Number	Summary of Projects	Status
1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9	Fiskville environmental assessments (soil, surface water, sediments, groundwater, buried drums, landfills, Lake Fiskville and downstream ecology)	All well underway. Reports due late 2013
4	Assess electrical transformers and remove any containing PCBs	Completed
5	Human health risk assessments (occupational, Fiskville community, downstream)	All commenced. Reports due late 2013
6	Review of Fiskville OHS procedures for fire training water	Completed
10	Regional Training Ground environmental assessments	Assessments reactivated late May. Reports due late 2013

Initiative Number	Summary of Projects	Status
1, 3	Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) Board Committee and standing item on Board agenda	Completed
2	Implement AS4801 and ISO 14001 at training grounds and strive to achieve accreditation	Commenced. ISO 14001 project plan completed
4	Appoint independent monitor	Completed. Provision of evidence ongoing. First interim report submitted 31 July
5	Acquire specialist HSE expertise	Specialist HSE personnel have been hired and this initiative is nearing completion
6	Allocate training grounds to executive control of Operational Training and Volunteerism team	Completed
7	Establish program management team	Completed
8	Establish health surveillance program	Completed
9	Commission a health impact study	Commenced. Monash University has been commissioned to conduct the study. Findings report expected in late 2014
10, 11	Provide information packs to CFA members and community	Completed



MICK BOURKE CEO

www.cfa.vic.gov.au/ceoblog

As you're reading this, myself and the Executive Leadership Team are probably busy doing some reading of our own – we're looking through the feedback from CFA members following many meetings held across the state.

We have been, and continue to be, carefully considering all the feedback CFA members have sent through since we started talking with you about the next phase of Creating Our Future Together.

The proposed changes we put forward for your consideration are designed to set CFA up for the future – to make us a more modern and agile organisation, one which is around for our people and our communities for years to come.

We asked you for your thoughts on the following proposals:

- consolidating eight regions into five
- combining similar functions and resources and allocating resources by need
- transferring responsibility for support services from Fire & Emergency Management (F&EM) to the relevant support directorates to free up F&EM to focus on service delivery
- allocating resources by workload, not location
- revising the service delivery model so that brigades continue their focus on front line service delivery, with support from districts, groups, region and the State Support Centre (the renamed Burwood East headquarters).

The aim of these proposals is to:

- streamline our regional structure now that we have an effective district structure
- further develop brigade capacity and capability
- improve the Chief Officer's span of control and give the Chief the ability to set his priorities for service delivery

- clarify the chain of command and control for all operational members
- streamline support resources at the State Support Centre
- re-empower our operations managers and operations officers to lead locally
- provide better support service capability to brigades and volunteers.

Your responses to the above have given us a lot to think about. Thank you to everyone who asked the many and varied questions we received, and particularly to members who sent through their thoughts and suggestions on the proposed model.

As mentioned, the Executive Leadership Team has been and will continue to work through this feedback with the aim of confirming as soon as possible what our finalised service delivery and support model will look like.

From then, it will be up to all our people, with the support of a dedicated full-time team, to work towards implementing our future model. This team, with your involvement, will be critical to making any changes successful.

This team will work with CFA members to guide, support, monitor and report on progress around the change. They are not here to make change happen for you. Their first tasks are to determine more detail about the changes that will be introduced and the timing around these, and to communicate any decisions as soon as possible. We will hold ourselves accountable to these targets and deadlines and will report progress against them along the way.

This is only the beginning for CFA. There are significant changes ahead for our organisation and the emergency management sector within the next year and beyond. Everything we do better now sets up our organisation to continue to be leaders in emergency preparedness, response and readiness, and to face future challenges as a strong and adaptable organisation. ■

NEW DISABILITY ACTION PLAN

STORY JASON LEIGH

One in five Australians lives with a disability at any particular time and this is increasing with our ageing population.

Our people come from a wide range of backgrounds and we have members who live with disability and actively contribute to their communities and CFA.

CFA now has a disability action plan to ensure its services and programs are easily available to all Victorians, including those living with a disability. The plan was created in consultation with CFA members, Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria and disability organisations including Scope.

Over the next 12 months, CFA will:

- increase access to CFA's services and facilities by reducing barriers for people living with a disability
- ensure our employment procedures are non-discriminatory and provide disability awareness training across the organisation

- promote inclusion and participation of people living with a disability in CFA public activities
- ensure that CFA practices promote awareness of disability and the importance of participation for all employees, volunteers and members of our community.

To achieve these goals we will provide ramps, larger screens and adjustable desks where needed, communicate in a way that's accessible to everyone, review the way we promote jobs and volunteering opportunities and increase the level of disability awareness training in CFA.

Everyone in CFA is encouraged to become familiar with the plan, which is available online at cfa.vic.gov.au/about/reports-and-policies.

If you have any feedback about our disability action plan, contact one of the following representatives: Fire and Emergency Management – Kevin Pettit (9262 8934); People and Culture – Julie Winzar (5551 1500); Operational Training and Volunteerism – Kate Harrap (8822 8066); Communities and Communication – Christina Bucci (9262 8366); Land and Building Services – Mick Reed (9262 8350). ■



QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS

Congratulations to the five long-serving current and former CFA members who were recognised in this year's Queen's Birthday Honours. Ken Baxter, Andrew Howlett and Geoff Conway received the Australian Fire Services Medal (AFSM) and Kenneth Broadbent and John Fisher received the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM).



KEN BAXTER

Ken has dedicated 57 years to CFA and been highly active in Stratford brigade, the Avon group and at the regional level – including more than 20 years on the Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) Committee and a member of the working group that developed the Volunteer Charter. He's still an active firefighter.

A builder by trade, Ken has vastly improved Stratford Fire Station and others within the group, and has secured a number of additional firefighting vehicles for the brigade over the years.

He has worked tirelessly to ensure smooth cooperation and interoperability between local CFA brigades, groups and Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) units.

"I'm a great believer in working with DSE [now DEPI] and everyone helping one another. They helped me set up these tactical exercises without troops, which we used to call cloth map exercises, and they have been really supportive."



ANDREW HOWLETT

After 17 years as a member of Rochester brigade, Andrew Howlett joined Eaglehawk brigade and he quickly became part of its management team.

"The skills I've obtained being a school teacher gave me good organisational skills and helped me write submissions for funding," Andrew said.

Six years later, Maiden Gully brigade was formed and Andrew was elected the first brigade captain. During his 13 years as captain, Andrew helped the brigade become one of the most cohesive, well-equipped brigades in the district.



GEOFF CONWAY

Former CFA Deputy Chief Officer Geoff Conway has been recognised for his 30 years of dedicated service with an AFSM. Geoff was involved with CFA from a very young age. It was just what people did, growing up in Briagolong.

Geoff attributes his success at CFA mainly to luck and the people he has met and associated with throughout his long career as both a volunteer and paid firefighter, but this is just his humble nature.

In his own opinion, his greatest achievement was not rising through the ranks of CFA, but his ability to help and nurture the skills of volunteers and to help others to gain higher positions and knowledge.

Through Geoff's leadership and intelligence, CFA was able to develop and implement an innovative real-time performance monitoring system that was later adopted by the Victorian Police and other fire services.

KENNETH BROADBENT

Ballarat resident and long-time former CFA member Kenneth Broadbent has been awarded an OAM for 60 years of outstanding service to the community. In that time, Ken has served as a shire councillor and with 14 other service organisations.

Ken can proudly claim to be a founding member of the Leslie Manor brigade when it became a CFA brigade in the mid 1940s.

Ken recalls he and his brother were asked to assist with the transition of Leslie Manor to the newly formed Country Fire Authority that was then in its formative years. "There was no truck provided by CFA, so we had to get our own," he said.

The citation for his OAM reveals that Ken gave more than 40 years of service as a District Governor of Rotary International and a major benefactor of the Rotary Foundation.



JOHN FISHER

John Fisher has been awarded the OAM for services to the community of Chiltern and the Shire of Indigo.

An ex-captain of Browns Plains brigade in District 24's Rutherglen Group, John joined CFA in 1964 and served as captain for 27 years.

John has also served as the President of Chiltern Shire Council, Rutherglen High School Council, Chiltern Bowling Club, the Ovens and Murray Bowls Association and the Wodonga Show Committee, and remains busy with Bowls Victoria.

"I'm still on the truck when they need me. We're very fortunate to have a sprinkling of young people who are very interested in the brigade. We've got a new tanker and a fairly new fire station so things are going ahead well," John said.

"I'm really humbled to receive this award," said John. "I've thoroughly enjoyed everything I've been involved in, in the community." ■

EUAN FERGUSON CHIEF OFFICER

www.cfa.vic.gov.au/chiefblog

It was with a heavy heart that I, like many others in the global fire community, heard about the tragic deaths of 19 members of the Granite Mountain Hotshots Crew who lost their lives while protecting communities in the US state of Arizona on 30 June 2013. The Chief of the City of Prescott Fire Department confirmed the deaths of the firefighters and injury to eight other firefighters as the worst wildfire tragedy in Arizona history.

The work of firefighters, as we all know, carries with it inherent risks. The loss of these fine men while battling the Yarnell Hill fire is difficult for us all to comprehend. Our deepest sympathies are with the firefighters' families and colleagues in this sad time. CFA knows too well the tragedy of losing firefighters and the impact that it has on families and colleagues.

May it be a firm reminder to always place safety first at all incidents we respond to. The State Control Team recently resolved to highlight the '18 Watch Out' situations and the LACES guidelines. These are both fundamental to our safety doctrine.

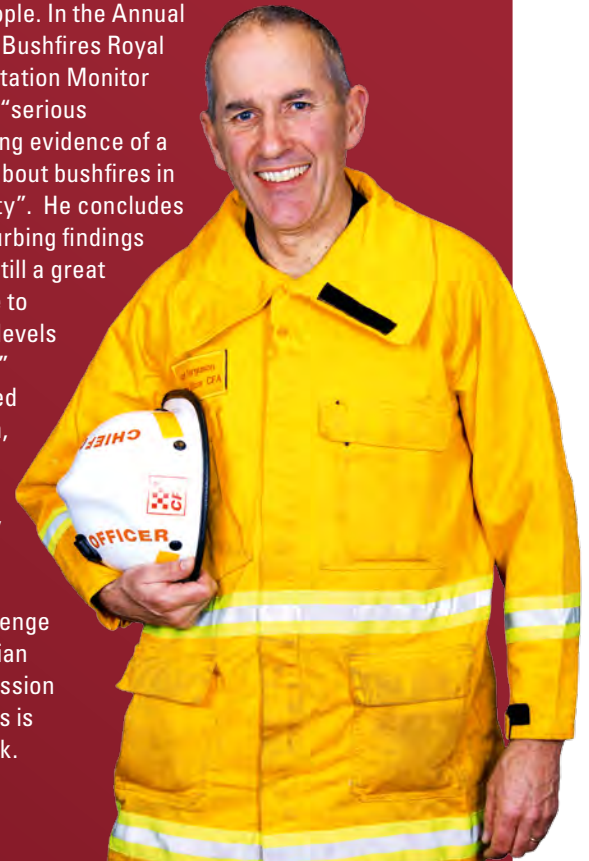
CFA has a new Fire and Emergency Management Training Strategy. This is the first strategy of its type in over a decade for CFA and it's a significant step forward. Training is an integral part of brigade life and we have come a long way in recent years in improving how we train. This strategy provides clarity on how we will approach training at CFA over the next five years and responds to many of the issues raised in recent internal and external reviews.

The strategy has been shaped by the many members, brigades, groups and committees who took the time to share their thoughts and input on the future of fire and emergency management training at CFA. The strategic goals highlight the importance of developing our people, demonstrating leadership, continually seeking to develop our capability, and building consistency and quality in training. A copy of the strategy will be sent to every brigade and group via their secretaries.

Saturday 3 August was the third CFA-sponsored Community Engagement and Fire Awareness Forum with the theme 'The Road

to Fire Safety – are we there yet?' The forum, held in Bendigo, saw more than 300 delegates from 160 brigades participating. The Forum focuses on local CFA and community leaders coming together to share their passion and ideas. The stark reality is that, whether it's in the home or bushfire environment, the sum total of our efforts at preventing, mitigating and engaging about fire, along with our readiness and response actions, are the difference between life and death for some people. In the Annual Report of the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, Implementation Monitor Neil Comrie expresses "serious concern" at the "growing evidence of a state of complacency about bushfires in the Victorian community". He concludes by saying, "These disturbing findings illustrate that there is still a great deal of work to be done to address the prevailing levels of public complacency."

The Forum showcased the energy, enthusiasm, initiative and commitment of our members in community education. These members are our front line, taking up the challenge identified by the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission and by Neil Comrie. This is essential, valuable work. My thanks to everyone who took part. ■



WE ARE CFA

CFA has launched a new suite of materials to help its members better communicate and promote CFA to the community and its stakeholders.

Titled We are CFA, the materials highlight what CFA does, its work beyond fighting bushfires, volunteer culture, history and work with the community to help protect lives and property across Victoria.

Following extensive consultation, the information was designed to be simple and generic and can be used by all brigades and members for a variety of events and campaigns. This may include recruitment drives, induction events and training, fire safety talks, presentations to community groups, exhibitions, events and brigade website content.

The materials are:

- We are CFA video – a two-minute video giving a visual overview of what CFA does and how it has evolved.
- We are CFA PowerPoint presentation – a 30-page presentation that members can tailor by removing irrelevant pages, for example, to suit their particular presentation.
- We are CFA brochure – a four-page handout that's a shortened version of the PowerPoint presentation. Regions and districts can request these by emailing s.shilcock@cfa.vic.gov.au.
- We are CFA event signage – a stand and a large fabric wall banner that can be used at major events and activities. This can be borrowed by contacting cfaevents@cfa.vic.gov.au.

The video and PowerPoint presentation have been sent on a USB memory stick to every brigade secretary, and can also be found on the Template Toolkit on CFA's intranet and Brigades Online. ■

JONES INQUIRY ACTION PLAN

STORY DARREN GREVIS-JAMES

The second quarterly report from the Jones Inquiry Joint Implementation Action Plan reveals further progress across a wide range of activities and initiatives to better support CFA brigades and volunteers.

Executive Director of Operational Training and Volunteerism (OT&V) Lex de Man said the action plan had been developed collaboratively between CFA and Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV), to make sure that the individual and collective needs of volunteers were addressed.

“Each quarter, we issue a report so that all CFA members can keep informed about the progress and status of the actions that flow from each of the themes in the action plan,” said Lex.

“In the past three months, there has been progress on the Minimum Skills review and the Chief Officer has signed off on all the 22 recommendations.”

Lex said other achievements include the introduction of a simplified brigade member transfer process and a range of CFA training materials now available online.

The Chief Officer has also approved the introduction of an Operational Role Progression Pathway Map.

On the ground, field evaluation of the new mobile training props is well advanced and testing and evaluation are continuing across CFA districts.

Transition of the field training campuses to OT&V was finalised in July this year, and planning approvals are almost complete for the new field training campus at Mildura.

The Joint Implementation Action Plan includes 46 strategies and 141 actions to be delivered over the coming years. It was developed in conjunction with the VFBV as a response to David Jones’s report *Into the Effect of Arrangements Made by CFA on its Volunteers* in July 2011. ■

To read any of the reports or make a comment, go to Brigades Online or email jonesinquiry@cfa.vic.gov.au



FIVE-YEAR TRAINING STRATEGY

STORY DARREN GREVIS-JAMES

CFA’s Board has endorsed a Fire and Emergency Management Training Strategy for the next five years. The objective of the strategy is to ensure that brigades and groups are supported and empowered with the right framework, systems and culture to deliver training.

OT&V has worked closely with Fire and Emergency Management (F&EM) in the review, planning and development of the new strategy.

Chief Officer Euan Ferguson said the strategy was introduced following lengthy discussions and consultation with volunteers, culminating in the circulation of a discussion paper in the first half of 2012. CFA members said that the training improvements they’d most like to see were consistency, more access to local and flexible training delivery and better training materials.

Euan said the strategy holds true to the six themes identified in the original discussion paper. “This includes how we will improve training systems, the processes, and how it will be undertaken across all CFA,” he said. “The plan highlights the importance of developing our people, demonstrating leadership and continually seeking to develop our capability.”

The strategy commits to several key criteria including valuing members’ time and supporting brigades and groups to determine and deliver training programs. Real fire training will be an imperative, as well as the recognition of leadership and development. The strategy also appreciates the diversity of needs between rural, regional and metropolitan brigades.

The F&EM and OT&V teams will oversee the implementation of the strategy. The first stage is already underway, with a number of actions occurring as part of CFA’s response to the Jones Inquiry. Other significant projects, such as the introduction of new fixed and mobile infrastructure, the Minimum Skills review, and the development of an operational skills map, are also in progress.

Every fire brigade has been sent a copy of the strategy, and it can also be viewed at Brigades Online on CFA’s intranet. ■



CFA TRUCKS FIND NEW HOME IN FIJI

STORY LEITH HILLARD

Six second-hand CFA fire trucks recently sold to the Fijian National Fire Authority (NFA) are a welcome boost to its fleet.

The five pumpers and one tanker are 1987-88 vintage, with low mileage, sold under the capital replacement program. The trucks are now based in Nausori, Valelevu, Pacific Harbour, Nadi, Labasa and Savusavu fire stations. They join a Fijian fleet of 41 fire trucks that includes 13 trucks more than 20 years old and 10 over 10 years old.

"The trucks were accepted by the NFA staff with so much enthusiasm and have really boosted the morale of the team," said NFA CEO John O'Connor. "Their arrival was very timely since the Lands Authority has raised concerns about the condition of some of the chassis of our trucks."

"These were the best of our retired vehicles," said Executive Manager of Fleet Services Peter Wright. "John O'Connor and an NFA mechanic inspected the vehicles before we put them through the Cranbourne workshop for a full safety check and any repairs. Everything was roadworthy to our standards. Operational checks

were done on all pumps and vehicle equipment and we then stickered the trucks with their corporate logos."

CFA also included two caches of road accident rescue equipment in the shipment, with Melbourne company PT Hydraulics donating its time to do safety checks.

As well as buying the trucks, NFA bolstered its supplies of boots, gloves, helmets, tunics, breathing apparatus, air compressors and communications equipment.

"NFA is looking forward to purchasing the best of the retiring CFA 2,400-litre and 3,200-litre tankers later this year," continued John.

"The purchase of the six vehicles and the additional tankers is part of an NFA short-term strategy to build our fleet and water capacity in our current stations and enable NFA to establish fire posts in other quickly-developing urban centres.

"From 2015, NFA will start purchasing new fire trucks while continuing to consider the purchase of the best-conditioned CFA trucks.

"NFA has a good, long working relationship with CFA and NFA is so thankful to CFA for its assistance and kind consideration." ■

Above: Firefighters at Savusavu Fire Station, Vanua Levu get a boost to their fleet

SERVICE DELIVERY STRATEGY

STORY TANYA MORRISON

As fire and other emergency risks change over time, we need to adapt and change the mix and balance of our services so that Victorians remain safe, CFA is trusted and respected, and our people are safe, valued and supported.

To help us provide the right services as we head to 2025 and beyond, we're developing a Service Delivery Strategy. The strategy will consider factors that will have an impact on emergencies in the future and the ways these can be managed to achieve greater public safety. For example, the strategy will consider trends in population, settlement, climate change and extreme weather, volunteerism and technology.

A focus group (representing volunteers, regions, headquarters' departments, the Fire Services Commissioner's Office and other emergency service

organisations and stakeholders) is helping to develop the strategy, which is expected to be released by the end of 2013.

The Service Delivery Strategy discussion paper was released in mid July, and has undergone statewide consultation over the past few months in districts and regions as well as with our emergency service partners and other stakeholders.

The consultation period closes in mid September, so you still have time to read the discussion paper. The paper and online survey are available on the CFA intranet and Brigades Online (click on 'About CFA', followed by 'service delivery' and 'service delivery strategy'). If you are unable to download the paper, contact Cara Philips or Helen Mackenzie on 9262 8586 for a hard copy. If you have any questions contact Project Manager Phil Harbutt on 9262 8532. ■

AFAC AND BUSHFIRE CRC CONFERENCE

STORY CHARLOTTE AZZOPARDI

More than 1,000 delegates attended the 20th AFAC and 10th Bushfire CRC conference in Melbourne in the first week of September 2013, to discuss the latest challenges and trends in emergency management.

CFA Chief Officer Euan Ferguson, who chaired the conference steering committee, said this year's theme, Shaping Tomorrow Together, recognised the need for emergency services to work together with the community and other partners from the education, health, business and research sectors and all levels of government, to shape our future.

During the four-day conference, national and international speakers from different industries presented more than 90 sessions to contribute to the emergency management sector's understanding of how to work together to form partnerships.

Themes covered in the forum included:

- the need for transformational change
- how emergency management is responding to future challenges
- creating public value
- large-scale disaster: what should be done differently?
- risk management: taking a risk-based approach for the future

AFAC CEO Stuart Ellis said the key objective of the conference was to ensure that collective industry knowledge and experience were captured and shared between peers.

Bushfire CRC CEO Gary Morgan said the conference was a great opportunity for all emergency management practitioners to learn what's being discovered about the biggest challenges in emergency management across Australasia, and finding ways to use this knowledge every day to make our communities safer.

Leading international and Australian experts who presented included:

- Professor Tim Flannery, Chief Climate Commissioner
- David Kaufman, Associate Administrator for Policy, Program Analysis and International Affairs, Federal Emergency Management Agency, US
- Professor Kate Auty, Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability, Victoria
- Sam Johnson, founder of the New Zealand Student Volunteer Army
- Vij Randeniya, Chief Fire Officer, West Midlands Fire Service, UK
- Dr Richard Gasaway, a former Chief Officer in the US and founder of Situational Awareness Matters, US
- Ivan Pupilidy, US Forest Service
- Professor John Handmer, Bushfire CRC Principal Scientific Adviser and RMIT University
- Andrew Demetriou, CEO, Australian Football League
- Craig Lapsley, Fire Services Commissioner, Victoria
- Neil Comrie, President, Metropolitan Fire Brigade
- Professor John Alford, Professor of Public Sector Management at Melbourne Business School, University of Melbourne and the Australia and New Zealand School of Government
- Philip Sittleburg, Chief of La Farge Fire Department, Wisconsin, US.



Above: Delegates at the 2012 Perth conference

TRADE EXPO

A trade exhibition took place throughout the conference. At the expo, CFA's Healthwatch team offered free 15-minute health checks to conference delegates, including measurements of height, weight and waist circumference, blood pressure and a cholesterol and blood glucose check. Since 2008, CFA has done over 8,000 health checks on CFA members.

The team also exhibited its new physiological monitoring system that's being used to gather information in real time on the physiological responses of firefighters to different firefighting tasks and events. With electrocardiography data and information on core temperature, skin temperature, heart rate and breathing rate, CFA is better able to understand the strain that's placed on firefighters, and can develop ways to improve rehabilitation practices and overall firefighter safety.

Research into CFA's Community Fireguard program was also highlighted at the conference through a poster display. This program aims to establish self-reliant neighbourhood groups in high bushfire risk areas, empowering residents to take responsibility for their own fire safety. The research, led by the University of Melbourne in partnership with Deakin University and CFA, focused on reviewing the ongoing relevance and cost-effectiveness of the program.

The review showed that those people engaged by the Community Fireguard program had successful outcomes – in terms of increased psychological and physical preparedness – but acknowledged the limitations of the program to reach beyond those motivated to prepare for bushfire. ■

ABOUT AFAC

The Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council (AFAC) is the peak body for Australasian fire, land management and emergency services, working to create synergy across the industry. AFAC is a trusted source of incident management expertise, information and advice and actively engages in emergency management, working with emergency management practitioners across all industries and sectors. AFAC is a leader in managing risk, preparing for and responding to emergencies.

ABOUT THE BUSHFIRE CRC

The Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre is the national research centre for fire and emergency services, conducting research into the social, environmental and economic impacts of bushfires.

DIGITAL DISPATCH NETWORK PROGRESSING

STORY ALEX JOHNSTON

Work is underway to build the 193 sites across Victoria that will form the backbone of CFA's new digital Regional Radio Dispatch Service (RRDS) network. Telstra recently completed the first two sites at Kinglake and Pretty Sally, and test transmissions produced clear, strong and uninterrupted radio communications.

RRDS will deliver greatly-improved dispatch communications for regional brigades across the state compared with current dispatch arrangements. It will provide better coverage, better quality and enhanced dispatch processes through VicFire. Dispatch communications across the state will meet a minimum standard for the first time in CFA's history, no matter where a brigade is located, reducing the risk to emergency services personnel and the public.

The 'Duress' button will be enabled on radios as part of the transition to RRDS.

The RRDS project team is currently working with district operations managers to plan the transition, which is scheduled to start in late 2013 and be undertaken



PHOTO: COURTESY OF TELSTRA

progressively until the middle of 2014. Each district will transition as a whole, at an agreed time determined by the district operations manager.

Starting in October, RRDS technicians will work through each district to reprogram all radios. This is necessary to allow the radios to access the new network.

Brigades and members will receive detailed information about the new communications capability and how it will work, along with training to ensure members are ready for the transition.

More information about the RRDS project is available on the CFA intranet or Brigades Online, or by emailing the project team at rds@cfa.vic.gov.au. ■

IN BRIEF

CFA CARAVAN CLUB

CFA Caravan Club was recently formed to foster relationships, social harmony and reduce social isolation for current and former CFA volunteers, career firefighters and other staff. It will enable them to participate in activities associated with owning and using caravans, including camper trailers and motor homes.

To find out more, contact Club President John Raymond on 0428315208, or email raymonds@mondray.com.au.

CHOOSE TAP INSTEAD OF BOTTLED WATER

STORY DARLENE PENTLAND



PHOTO: DARLENE PENTLAND

For several years, CFA has provided bottled drinking water to help maintain firefighter hydration during incidents and training exercises. Almost two million bottles have been distributed since 2007.

As well as costing hundreds of thousands of dollars, bottled water also has a significant environmental cost. Bottled water has many negative environmental impacts throughout its life cycle from water extraction and plastic bottle production, through product storage and distribution, to the disposal of empty bottles. There are hidden financial costs associated with each of these environmental impacts.

Recently, our reliance on bottled water has increased. CFA buys three times the amount of bottled water it did in 2008, despite the number of firefighters and incidents remaining relatively uniform during that time.

Many CFA members have recognised that our use of bottled water is unsustainable and understand the need for us to

reconsider how we use bottled water. We live in a state where clean drinking water is generally readily available. Melburnians have some of the best drinking water in the world – ours is one of only five cities worldwide where drinking water comes from protected natural catchments. So it makes sense for us to choose tap water wherever possible.

To help CFA members make informed choices about where their next drink comes from, CFA has partnered with Yarra Valley Water (YVW) to deliver the Choose Tap program to more than 60 CFA sites. With a program launch planned at Eltham Fire Station in September, Choose Tap will be rolled out in coming weeks to integrated stations, volunteer urban and rural brigades, a service centre and offices within the YVW district.

So next time you're on station, at your brigade or in the office, choose tap instead of bottled water. ■

FIREYS CANOEING IN INAUGURAL CUP

Do you want an adventure this Christmas and get fit at the same time? Join the YMCA Murray Marathon fire brigade team in this year's iconic five-day canoe race, and compete in the inaugural Emergency Services Challenge Cup.

The fireys' team is already training in Albury but more paddlers are needed to fill the relay team. The only requirements are a reasonable level of fitness and the ability to swim – and novice paddlers are encouraged to have a try.

The YMCA Murray Marathon is the longest canoe/kayak race in the southern hemisphere. Last year's event attracted more than 400 paddlers and 1,500 associated ground crew, who moved along the Murray River between Yarrowonga and Swan Hill from Boxing Day to New Year's Day.

For more information about joining the fireys' team, contact John Schneider on 0428 507 450 or email wotview@harboursat.com.au. You can read more about the event at murraymarathon.ymca.org.au. ■



PHOTO: LUKE PLUMMER

ULTRALIGHT CREW PROTECTION GEL TRIAL

STORY LEITH HILLARD

CFA is heading a project team investigating how injection-sprayed polymer gel can protect crews in slip-on units and ultralight tankers.

CFA is conducting the research in consultation with industry, Department of Environment and Primary Industries, and Australasian Fire and Emergency

Service Authorities Council agencies. As part of this experimental phase, a vehicle was recently tested at the New South Wales Rural Fire Service field testing facility managed by CSIRO.

"Ultralights carry very little water," said CFA's Manager Research and Innovation David Nichols. "Our crew protection systems on medium and heavy tankers use a lot of water so there's no such system on the ultralights. We have about 150 ultralights and slip-on units and need to expand the way we protect our crews."

In the test, an ultralight covered in polymer gel was placed on top of a 10-metre by 10-metre propane grid punctuated by burners. The grid simulates the progression of a bushfire flame front with radiant heat building up and leading to a burnover of the vehicle before moving away.

"We relied on a steady prevailing wind over the bushfire flame front grid to simulate a moderate intensity fire," explained David. "It was 5,000 kilowatts per square metre which is life threatening."

"We used a gel injection system that combines the liquid gel and water at the nozzle to form a very viscous substance. It's sprayed over the vehicle through a crew protection system and only uses about 40 litres of water."

The polymer gel soaks up hundreds of times its weight in water, creating millions of tiny drops of water protected by a polymer shell. The water-absorbent polymers act as a thermal protective blanket.

"The temperature recorded was between 700°C and 900°C outside the cab during the burnover, but 45°C below the window level inside, behind the drop-down curtains. Higher up in the cab, though, it got to 60°C. It was survivable inside the ultralight cabin."

This test confirmed that the gel is a good insulator and flame retardant but after it has been used the vehicle is not likely to be salvageable.

"We're comfortable with the performance of the gel injection system so far but we're still at the experimental stage with this project," said David. ■



PHOTO: COURTESY OF CSIRO

BRIGADES EDUCATING communities

STORY JOHN O'MEARA

Community is the DNA of CFA. The CFA logo and yellow overalls are symbols that communities trust. CFA volunteers can use this trust to help their communities better prepare for fire and other emergencies.



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

Above: John Warbrick from Baxter brigade

For many decades, CFA members have connected with their communities well beyond responding to emergencies – Christmas events, Royal Children’s Hospital appeals, attending local fetes and markets, doing local fire safety promotions, talking with schoolchildren through CFA programs. All these things add up to connecting with community, promoting CFA and the cause of fire safety.

However, big changes occurred after the 2009 fires. Everything had to. As with the Black Friday fires of 1939 and following Ash Wednesday in 1983, an inquiry into death, trauma and destruction grappled with ways in which the people of Victoria could be safer next time.

Some fundamental change was required, particularly the level of preparedness of individuals and community to take safe actions during emergencies.

Even so, being called a shiny bum rocked Deputy Chief Officer Steve Warrington back on his heels. Steve was at a community meeting telling local people how to be better prepared for the coming summer. That day, he was a can-do man with a can’t-do message. He relayed the stark fact that, in a major fire, the brigade cannot guarantee that a truck and crew will get to and save every property. It was a warning that early in his career he might have been sacked for delivering. It didn’t go down well with some of the audience.

“The local captain got up and said, ‘Don’t listen to the shiny bum from headquarters. He wouldn’t know. Listen to me!’,” said Steve. There and then it struck him with a force he describes as like a punch on the nose “that we hadn’t educated our own people. They were there saying: we’re here to fight a fire. We’re going to get in our truck and save lives.”

Steve was referring to how CFA fulfils one part of its mandate: fire prevention. The captain was focused exclusively on the other aspect: fire suppression. There was, to put it mildly, some tension as to how the two approaches should fit together.

It’s from scenes such as this that a movement has gained momentum in CFA over recent years. “We are on a journey that we know can save lives in ways other than by rolling up in a fire truck,” said Steve.

“WE CAN SAVE LIVES IN WAYS OTHER THAN BY ROLLING UP IN A FIRE TRUCK”

The movement is, in some ways, a return to the founding spirit of CFA as an organisation based on people banding together to face an adverse landscape. It also arises from lessons learned after the 2009 fires and the recommendation of the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission that all fire services personnel should be well-equipped to educate fellow residents about bushfire safety. The Commission also acknowledged the work of education personnel and some brigades in working to build preparedness and resilience by educating communities about fire safety.

One crucial event in starting the member engagement movement was a visit by 16 passionate brigade members to a conference of the New South Wales Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) in 2010. Ali Martin, then manager of the Member Engagement Project, led the group to learn how the NSW RFS involved its members in community safety and to consider how that could be adopted more broadly in Victoria. The idea was that this small band, later formalised as the Member Engagement Volunteer Reference Group, could inspire others to strengthen brigades through activities designed to enable and educate their communities. Member engagement and community engagement could reinforce one another.

“I didn’t map out exactly what we would do,” said Ali. “All I did was map out a process to get volunteers mobilised and interested. Whatever came out of that would be what the members wanted.”



PHOTO: DIANE LAWSON

RESPECT FOR THE PEOPLE IN YELLOW PANTS

The 16 'champions' who went to NSW were a driving force behind CFA's first annual Community Engagement and Fire Awareness Forum held in Macedon in 2011. About 140 members from 70 brigades got together to share ideas about how to lead communities to greater self-reliance.

At a second forum, in Creswick in 2012, an audience of 220 members heard social researcher David Chalke talk about CFA's trump card – the regard in which local members and volunteers are held. According to David, people everywhere respond to the authenticity of members. Their yellow overalls are an emblem of community safety.

Members start off with significant advantages, said David. "The very fact that you are an ordinary sort of person who makes sacrifices and does heroic things, means automatically that I am going to listen to you," he said. "The uniform of yellow pants and red braces brings with it authority and respect."

David makes the point that the most effective form of communication in a world where local voices have the greatest appeal is personal, one-on-one conversations.

Among those taking such sentiments to heart is Glenburn brigade Captain David Webb-Ware. Glenburn members support and appreciate programs such as Fire Ready Victoria, he said, but not all can present formal programs. They are, however, natural communicators and are always talking to their family, friends and neighbours. On CFA Sunday last year they gave practical demonstrations of survival skills.

"In a rural brigade like Glenburn here in the Yarra Ranges, we've got a huge array of skills and life experience among our volunteers," said David. "While we encourage people to leave early, we also accept that the majority of people here are going to stay and

defend on a bad day. So we need to provide support for those who make that decision.

"A couple of our members are mechanics so we got them to talk about pump maintenance, how to get pumps going easily, what sort of pumps are required. They are the perfect people to talk on the same level to their neighbours about any issues that involve mechanics and bushfire safety."

Someone who knows a bit about the different kinds of skills and experience that a brigade needs is veteran member Bruce Conboy. He has seen many changes in his 33 years with the all-volunteer Mount Martha brigade, during which he has put in five years as captain and served two stints – and almost 20 years – as secretary. It is one of many roles Bruce stepped up to because of his background as a local government civil engineer.

Bruce is active in Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria, where he's a member of the Community Safety Advisory Council (CSAC), an important group that began long before the 2009 fires. CSAC has been a strong advocate for community-based fire preparedness and prevention programs.

Bruce said there were good reasons behind the introduction some years ago of six-day Minimum Skills training for all CFA members. But it had an unwanted side effect. "Previously, members and volunteers had always engaged with their communities. They went to schools and public meetings telling people 'this is what you have to do to help protect yourself and your neighbours'. But while people were doing all that training, CFA brought in employed staff to do that education role."

Staff can play a role in this, but the more people having the important conversation the better – particularly at a real, local level.

Above: The 2013 Community Engagement and Fire Awareness Forum



Above: Paul Considine from Edithvale brigade talking to locals

THE PENDULUM SWINGS BACK

In 2013, CFA's Board made it clear that fire prevention and community preparedness were core business. "Look at the CFA Act," said Bruce. "It says we're here to do prevention and suppression. And we know fire prevention can save more lives than we can ever save through firefighting."

Bruce said that making residents fire aware was especially important in his area, which has changed from being a semi-rural summer holiday destination to a dormitory suburb with a new and growing population less aware of the fire threat than the locals of old.

Mount Martha brigade takes any opportunity to connect with local people. The brigade helps the Uncle Bob's club with the Royal Children's Hospital appeal and the Salvation Army with the Red Shield appeal. These are opportunities to foster goodwill, fly the CFA flag, wear the braces and get talking to people. Bruce said being involved with the Fire Safe Kids program at two pre-schools is a great way to get to parents, especially those who are new to the area.

"We are talking to the kids to get the messages to their parents," he said. And it's catchy. With the increased emphasis on community engagement as a way to engage either new or long-serving volunteers, Mount Martha brigade is working on tapping into wider groups.

"Rather than asking them to come to us, we're thinking now we'll go out more and take the message to the people," said Bruce. "We'll go out and engage the Probus Club and the Rotary Club, all sorts of groups in the community."

That willingness for a brigade to connect with people wherever they are found – the pub, the footy oval, the service club – and to talk to them in their own language, is precisely what CFA is trying to foster. The focus is on having diverse localities become safer and more resilient.

Role descriptions for community safety tasks have been produced should brigades need them, and there are training pathways and support materials in line with the new Brigade and Membership Classification. Activity planning templates that brigades can customise to local needs are also available. It's all part of ensuring there's direction and standards – providing high-quality, consistent fire safety examples – that brigades can adapt to their own environment.

"We need to be realists. In some cases brigades are already busy beyond their local capacity, so let's think outside the square," said Executive Manager of Community Capability Terry Hayes. "Let's ask ourselves whether it's OK to go down the road and ask a local service club, the school council or the footy club to lend some arms and legs and the time and talent of some articulate people to help us get our message out across the community."

Elissa Jans has certainly caught the fervor. Somewhere between Wollongong and Sydney, when returning from the NSW RFS conference, Elissa and her fellow delegates decided to organise a CFA state forum aimed at volunteers. The Olinda brigade secretary also gives up a Sunday every second month to join the Member Engagement Volunteer Reference Group, swapping ways and means of encouraging fellow volunteers to keep the safety message fresh, relevant and authoritative.

"We weren't sure where it would go initially," said Elissa, "but we wanted to bring together like-minded people to talk about common goals and see how volunteers and staff could all be in this together."

"You do need to be a little bit crazy. We are all very passionate community people, we are all extremely opinionated," she said. "It was obvious from the first forum that there were people all over the state who were also like that. We wanted them to join our group to keep that enthusiasm going. It's all about getting more people in, building on interest and sharing information."

Olinda is on a ridge line that runs across the Dandenong Ranges. Like its two neighbouring brigade areas (Sassafras-Ferny Creek and Kalorama-Mount Dandenong), it's exposed every summer to massive fire risk and has few evacuation routes. Elissa said that writing her brigade's community education plan was a huge task for one person. "I thought we should share it with the other brigades that sit on this ridge. My captain was OK with that so we began coming together on community safety."

Out of that grew the Ridgetop Brigades Family Fun and Information day. Jointly hosted by the brigades, it drew 200 people in its first year, 2011. Last year, it attracted more than 1,000.

"It's about bringing brigades together for a common purpose and a common good, sharing resources and sharing members," said Elissa. "Next year, we're going to make it a real multi-agency event. We will have SES, Red Cross, St John, road rescue, the council, police and Department of Environment and Primary Industries. It will be a one-stop shop our communities can come to every year."

"It came about through wanting to get together as brigades and we've been working together really well. It's also been a great opportunity for members to get to know each other. Often, we see each other on a fireground where we're trying to save the world. That's stressful! It's good to get together in a more relaxed atmosphere, it's been very beneficial for inter-brigade relationships."

Elissa believes that increasing the visibility of the brigade has made the Ranges safer. "The more we are out in the community, the more the community sees us. The more recognition the brigade's getting, the more trust we build," she said.

"The brigade is realising we are the community and being able to keep our community educated and up-to-date with what they should and shouldn't be doing reduces their risk. It's ultimately beneficial to everybody and reduces the number of call-outs we have had to go to."

COMMUNITY MUST SHARE THE RESPONSIBILITY

According to Deputy Chief Officer Steve Warrington, the idea that trucks and equipment can overpower natural disaster is dangerously outmoded. He points to the 1,833 deaths caused by Hurricane Katrina when it hit the coast of the United States in August 2005.

“Katrina was a real eye-opener for the Americans. They are very proud people and they were devastated. There were people dying in houses that firefighters couldn’t get to. These major events are overwhelming. When they come, it’s what people do for themselves that determines whether they live or die.

“Our charter as an organisation is to save lives and property. We have the potential to save more lives and property by making people know these disasters are going to happen, know what to do, know what tools they need and know who they can turn to for information; but to plan as if we, as emergency service organisations, don’t exist.”

“IT’S ABOUT TAKING ON BOARD THE ADVICE AND LOCAL KNOWLEDGE AVAILABLE IN EACH COMMUNITY”

Bushfires Royal Commission Implementation Monitor Neil Comrie puts similar stress on the need for personal and communal preparation and local defences. After the Interim Report of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission was released in 2009, Neil was tasked with ensuring that the government and emergency agencies acted on the measures they committed to. So far, he’s completed three progress reports, and is well placed to comment on how recent fire and floods have changed how we think about disaster management, the role of volunteers and the need for local plans.

“The commission made the point that every person in the community shares some of the responsibility in preparing ourselves and reducing the risks associated with bushfire,” said Neil. “It’s not just a government responsibility.”

“If we are going to make any significant difference to improving the safety and security of people in the face of natural disasters, it needs to be dealt with at the local level, involving the local

community, addressing issues of risk in their community and putting plans in place to minimise the risks.”

Broad-based blueprints for emergency management coming out of Melbourne and regional centres are useful, said Neil, but only if they are adapted to have direct relevance to local conditions and resources. “Local, relevant, genuine” are the keywords, echoing another of David Chalke’s observations. David suggested that post-war societies tuned into central voices – the directions of government, the view of the press, the ideas broadcast through a handful of television stations.

That’s changed in the past decade or so. David said we’ve returned to being a society in which many divergent voices drown each other out. What cuts through the noise is the voice of the men and women who live ordinary lives but set themselves apart through their uniform and are respected for their commitment to protecting friends, family and neighbours.

Neil Comrie said the new and authentic engagement model demanded genuine interaction with local communities. “It’s about listening to and taking on board the advice and local knowledge that’s available in each community,” he said. “And from that information, working with local communities to develop plans that give the community the ability to minimise risks associated with disasters.

“People who are unable to undertake front line duties can be exceptionally helpful in activities such as communication or education,” he said.

“This work shouldn’t be undervalued. People who think they can make a contribution will be welcome. It’s beyond question how dependent we are on volunteers. We rely absolutely on volunteers and we need to make sure they are supported as much as possible.”

Those issues were on the agenda of the highly-successful third Community Engagement and Fire Awareness Forum held in Bendigo in August.

“At Bendigo we saw over 300 delegates from 160 brigades participating,” said Chief Officer Euan Ferguson. “The Forum focused on local CFA and community leaders coming together to share their passion and ideas and to network.”

“Thank you to all who took part and those who helped to make sure the event ran smoothly. It was a job well done!”

If you’re interested in getting your brigade more involved in the community, CFA can offer support, resources and publications that may assist you. Contact your regional community education coordinator (CEC) for more information. ■

Below left: Volunteers are helping locals to help themselves in the community-led planning project

Below right: Phil Graham from Heyfield brigade at Heyfield Primary School



PHOTO: DAVID SALAU

NEW REGIONAL HQ AND STATION AT DANDENONG

STORY AMY SCHILDBERGER

Construction is well underway of the new Southern Metropolitan Region headquarters and multi-agency emergency management complex. CFA has leased two floors of the new four-storey building at Dandenong South.

CFA Regional Director Peter Schmidt said the new headquarters and emergency management complex will amalgamate multiple offices and emergency management facilities into one building, ensuring efficient and satisfactory amenities into the future.

"Establishing a new site and securing a lease has been a long process, so it's great to see this project coming to fruition," Peter said.

"I have no doubt this new building will ensure the best level of service for this ever-growing and densely populated region. This includes service in the areas of both administrative and support as well as multiple tiers in the emergency management structure."

The building is expected to be finished by mid 2014 and will be up and running well before the 2014-15 bushfire season.

In another exciting announcement for the region, Dandenong brigade will move to a new \$13 million integrated station in mid 2014. The two-level station will be the largest of its kind in CFA, featuring a six-truck parking bay, amenities for up to 16 career



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

firefighters at any one time, large meeting and training areas, a gym, administration offices, large outdoor car park and practical training areas.

"Dandenong brigade is the busiest CFA station in the state.

This new station will enhance the brigade's ability to protect and serve the local and broader community now and into the future," Peter said. ■

Above: Work has started on Southern Metropolitan Region's new HQ

FIRING FIT

STORY AMY SCHILDBERGER

Volunteer members from Warburton brigade have a new spring in their step thanks to their new Fire Fit program.

The brigade recently started weekly group personal training sessions with former firefighter David Hoffman, who's a professional personal trainer.



PHOTO: TONY VAN MEURS

Warburton Brigade Captain Tony Van Meurs said David approached the brigade with the idea to train members.

"We were lucky enough to receive funding from our local Bendigo Bank for this program to go ahead," Tony said.

Warburton Yarra Junction Bendigo Bank donated \$5,500 to the brigade, which has covered the cost of equipment and personal training for a year.

"Redwood Community Centre has also generously allowed us to use their facility for the training every Thursday night and all the gym equipment remains on site, too.

"The training sessions are really challenging but in a good way. Everyone works at their own pace, which is great."

The brigade started the Fire Fit program just after Easter and members are already noticing positive results.

"I've personally noticed a huge improvement in my fitness and general wellbeing. I'm also eating better now too. I figured every little bit helps!" Tony said.

At the moment, eight Warburton members are doing the training, but Tony said more members will be joining the session soon.

"It's a great program and it's for a great cause – being fit is an important part of firefighting," he said.

"We're here to serve and protect our community but we also couldn't do this without the support and generosity of our community, and we thank them for that." ■

RECOGNITION FOR CFA MEMBERS DEPLOYED TO NZ QUAKE

STORY LEITH HILLARD

The New Zealand Fire Service Chief Executive/National Commander Paul Baxter travelled to Sydney in June to present medals to all members of the Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) deployed to Christchurch in 2011 following the devastating earthquake.

Frankston brigade's Senior Station Officer Doug Broom and Station Officer Tony Heafield from Geelong City were proud to stand alongside 150 of their deployment buddies to receive the medals at a ceremony also attended by the New Zealand High Commissioner to Australia, Martyn Dunne.

The medal of appreciation is known as the Canterbury Earthquake Citation, awarded by the region that was at the epicentre of the quake.

"We were very appreciative that Deputy Chief Officer Steve Warrington was there as a high-level CFA representative," said Doug.

"The whole experience has been a humbling honour and Tony and I were fortunate to have our names put forward.

"John Denny from New South Wales was our taskforce commander in 2011 and he made a speech at the air base before the deployment that I think really set the tone. He said, 'We are not the heroic rescuers and the people of Christchurch are not the grateful recipients of our largesse. It is our honour and our privilege to be going there.' It was a very well-received speech. Very inspiring."

Doug and Tony were both members of Australian Taskforce Three made up of about 70 people from a number of states and territories. It was one of three Australian taskforces, with each deployed for about 14 days starting from 27 hours after the 22 February quake.

The CFA members arrived 10 days later to a scene they both described as surreal.

"To be in a major CBD and see no one there but rescuers was something we never got used to," said Tony. "Every building and every street was damaged. You'd go into a coffee shop and see half-eaten meals just left on the tables. It was a ghost town; just desolate. It was like being on a movie set.

"We went as Category Two USAR technicians. We're trained to rescue people in major structural collapses using a range of gear from acoustic devices to specialist cameras, concrete cutters and mechanical equipment to shore up buildings."

Unfortunately, the team didn't find any survivors.

"In terms of the scale of the response, the only other thing I've experienced on that level was in the days after Black Saturday in 2009," said Doug.

"We were split between the CBD area known as the Red Zone and various suburbs, depending on the vagaries of the tremors.

"We worked on a strip shopping centre that was only moderately affected but the awnings were in danger of falling down. We fixed that up so the shopkeepers could open their shops again and the community could get supplies. It was returning just that little bit of normality to the lives of the residents.

"Lyttelton is a very steep suburb and we spent a day there working on retaining walls, protecting private properties and helping individuals in their homes."

Both members were proud to work alongside emergency services personnel and aid organisations from all over the world, sometimes as part of the same team.

"If ever you thought you were getting used to the scene, you'd look around and see the New Zealand Army and people deployed from China, South Korea, Japan, the US," said Doug. "It was awe inspiring that people had come from the other side of the world."

"I'm pretty proud that we went over and represented CFA," said Tony.

"It was good to go up to Sydney for the medal ceremony and catch up with so many of the team members. It was quite something."

More than two years after the major quake, parts of Christchurch's CBD remain cordoned off. ■



PHOTO: STEVE WARRINGTON

Above: Senior Station Officer Doug Broom (left) with New Zealand Fire Service Chief Executive/National Commander Paul Baxter and Station Officer Tony Heafield



Left: Tony in Christchurch after the earthquake

PHOTO: DOUG BROOM



HEARTFELT THANKS TO LOCH RESCUE UNIT

STORY GILL HEAL

PHOTO: COURTESY OF SOUTH GIPPSLAND SENTINEL-TIMES

Just after midnight on a stormy night in December last year, a utility crossed the road near the junction of the South Gippsland and Bass Highways and hit a west-bound van head on. When members of Loch brigade's Rescue Unit arrived at the scene, the ute driver was in an ambulance and the van driver had died and was still trapped in his vehicle.

The Major Collision Unit completed its work around 4am but needed daylight to take more photos. The Rescue Unit maintained its vigil through the night, waiting for clearance to free the trapped man.

Finally, as morning came, they got to work. They cut into the vehicle's pillars then carefully pulled away the shattered vehicle from around the man. When they finished he was gently moved.

What leads ordinary men and women to volunteer to do such a service, willing to be called out at any time to deal with often horrifying and traumatic circumstances?

Loch brigade formed its Rescue Unit in 1989. There'd been a car crash at Almurta and a mother of three young children had died. According to local Greig Barry, "The Loch blokes reckoned that if they'd had a rescue unit they may have saved her. They worked like billy-o to raise the money – dug up sleepers from the Wonthaggi-Nyora rail track and sold them." Greig joined soon after the unit formed.

Times have changed. In the olden days, skills and equipment were cruder. Winches used to pull cars apart, but now hydraulic rams are used. Modern cars are stronger, safer and more complicated. Airbags have to be got around.

The Loch unit now works with a computer system that maps the design of 30,000 vehicles. Every year, rescue units from all over the state visit Holden's site at Grantville to practise cutting open different cars, and sharing new ideas and methods.

The emotional and psychological toll on members needs constant vigilance. "You might think you can do all these things," said Greig, "but things happen that you can never prepare for." He knows the trauma of taking a parent to see a son or daughter who's died. "It's worse if it's someone you know. They're things you never forget."

Debriefing sessions help the unit monitor the impact of serious accidents on members, and a chaplain, psychologist, or peers may follow up ongoing trauma.

Dignity and respect have become the unit's credo. "You come to understand that the person in the vehicle is someone's child or parent," said Greig.

Anthony Wilson, who died that night in December, was a thoughtful man. While on holiday in Cambodia, he heard that the local kids had never been to the beach, so he hired a bus to take them. And he bought them all a toothbrush and a pair of shoes.

When police knocked on the door of Anthony's family home at 4am, the devastated family asked where he was and were shocked to be told he was still at the scene of the accident. "But who's out there with him?" they asked. "Volunteers", said the police, "the local rescue unit."

The following week, Anthony's brother Paul rang to thank the Rescue Unit crew for their care at the scene. Anthony's parents, Leo and Margaret, wanted to know whether mourners at the funeral could be invited to donate to the unit. Surprised and moved, the members gratefully accepted.

The Wilson family came to their January meeting with envelopes containing \$1,500. Louise, Anthony's sister, later added \$500 from a work raffle. "It really touched the members," said Greig.

The unit spent \$700 on a windscreen cutter, the first of its kind in Australia. The rest of the donation went on a new lighting set-up and battery-powered tools.

More recently, in mid June, members of the Wilson family and their friends visited Loch brigade to accept a framed memorial of Anthony as a sign of the unit's appreciation of their donation. Brief, heartfelt speeches were made. Strangers brought together by tragedy; grief bridged by acts of compassion, respect and gratitude.

Bringing meaning to a tragic event, linking all parties, is the good man Anthony Wilson. "He was that kind of person," said Paul. "Who he was, the many acts of kindness he had done throughout his life, were reflected in the sacrifice and efforts of local volunteers that night." ■

Above: (From left to right) Loch Rescue Unit members Pete Sullivan and Len Wyhoon, Anthony Wilson's sister Louise and brother Paul holding the memorial, and unit member Greig Barry



TRUCKS DRAW ADAM TO SOUTH MORANG

STORY LEITH HILLARD

For South Morang member Adam Bain, CFA is all about the trucks, trucks, trucks. One of his hobbies is to draw emergency services vehicles he sees on agency websites, and that's how he became a South Morang brigade member.

"Adam posted a drawing of the pumper on our brigade's Facebook page after seeing it on our website," explained Second Lieutenant Nathan Shell. "In March, I invited him to come out with us for a day when we did a tour of Plenty Gorge with MFB. There were about 10 vehicles there on the day so I think he enjoyed himself."

Adam has now become a non-operational brigade member who may well be tasked with doing inventories of the trucks.

"I've got mild to moderate autism," said Adam, "and a photographic memory. I'm very good at remembering registration plates, the makes and models of the trucks and how many gallons of water and foam they carry. I know what chassis they have and where they were manufactured."

He attends training every Monday night and has been challenged by activities such as draughting from a local lake, pulling the high pressure hose line and coupling to a hydrant.

He always takes his camera to the fire station to take more photos, which he uses to create drawings. "I also like the Hoppers Crossing rear-mounted pumper," he said. "I just like the look of it."

But it's not just Australian fire trucks that appeal to Adam. Using the Microsoft Paint program and drawing with a mouse, he can spend up to eight hours on each drawing of vehicles from the Victorian State Highway Patrol, Formula 1 and V8 supercars as well as fire trucks from the US, UK, New Zealand and Canada.

He has featured on the BBC news showing his drawings of London Fire Brigade trucks, has received memorabilia from emergency services around the world and has been declared an honorary brigade captain at Martins Ferry in Ohio.

But it's South Morang brigade members who've made him one of their own. "My parents are really rapt," said Adam. "I'm really rapt too and a little surprised." ■

Adam's drawings can be viewed at www.myspace.com/artworkbyadam

OXLEY FLATS' MULTIPLE CELEBRATIONS

STORY CRAIG HEARSON

Oxley Flats fire brigade celebrated its 60th birthday in style in late June, with the opening of a renovated fire station, the handover of a new medium tanker and many service awards.

Oxley Flats fire brigade was formed in 1953 as a direct result of local community concern after the tragic Tarrawingee fire around 10 years earlier on the other side of the Ovens River. At the celebratory event, two of the founding brigade members, Murray Evans and Jack Goodwin, had the privilege of cutting a cake to celebrate the occasion. Both men, plus Evadne Evans, were honoured with brigade life memberships for their commitment to the community.

District 23 Operations Manager Stewart Kreltzhaim, who presented the life memberships, said it was only the second time in his 20-year career that he had had the honour of presenting such awards. He also talked of the critical work done by Murray and Evadne as volunteers managing 24-hour radio communications for the Wangaratta Group before the centralised system was introduced.



PHOTO: MARC BONGERS

Oxley Flats station is in a flood overlay so the planning process was difficult. CFA was required to retain part of the original frame. The height of the front of the station was raised to accommodate the new tanker, and the outside was reclad. Also, the power was upgraded, a new phone connection was added, a new sealed concrete floor was laid, and a remote-controlled roller door replaced the original sliding doors.

On a busy day, the brigade also took delivery of a new Hino four-wheel drive crew cab medium tanker to replace the current 1988 two-wheel drive tanker. ■

NEW STATION FOR BEULAH

STORY DEBORAH RIGGALL

The community of Beulah in District 18 saw another page written in history in late June when they attended the opening of Beulah's new fire station.

When everyone was seated in the twin engine bay, Operations Manager Bill Johnstone stepped up to start the proceedings. Bill first asked Yarriambiack Shire Councillor Helen Ballentine to say a few words, followed by Loddon Mallee Regional Director Patrick O'Brien. Member of Parliament for Mildura, Peter Crisp, then officially opened the new station and unveiled a plaque with Beulah Captain Alan Smith.

'This new fire station is fitting recognition of the important contribution this brigade has made to the state's emergency service,' said Mr Crisp.

The station has a meeting room, store room, office, a well-equipped kitchen and a maintenance room for breathing apparatus.

"It has far more space than our old station – about triple the space – and having heating and cooling is a big advantage over the old one," said Captain Alan Smith. "And the remote-controlled roller door makes life easy compared with a manual door."

"Although this was the official opening, we've actually had the station for about eight months and have already used it for birthday and Christmas parties."

"To help keep the engine room tidy, we also built a new shed behind the station to store equipment," said Alan.

Beulah has been an active brigade, participating in fire prevention competitions and urban and rural demonstrations, and many members have helped fight campaign fires throughout Victoria and neighbouring states. It has 91 members, many trained in bushfire, low structure, first-aid and breathing apparatus. ■



PHOTO: DEBORAH RIGGALL

WHEN THE FIRES COME DVD LAUNCHED

STORY LEITH HILLARD

CFA's Community Development Coordinator of School Education Programs Dawn Hartog was president of the Kinglake Ranges Neighbourhood House when it received funding in 2010 from the Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund.

A working party comprising Black Saturday fire-affected residents was formed and Fine Focus Film and Photography was commissioned to put together a film, *When the Fires Come*, that captured the stories of nine fire-affected participants.

A journalist interviewed them and what came through were strong messages of radiant heat danger, the need for sprinklers, mental and physical preparedness, knowing the area that you live in, and being aware of your surroundings.

As someone who fought to save her home alongside her husband and fellow

Community Fireguard neighbours, Dawn was involved in the working party behind the film's production. Her involvement was not related to her CFA role, but as a member of a fire-affected community.

"The film was initially only going to look at the Kinglake Ranges," said Dawn, "but we quickly saw that it was much more valuable to look at Victoria's experiences of the day."

"Its purpose was for participants to re-live and process their experiences. It is their stories of survival but it's only a drop in the ocean of experiences out there from the day. We hope that other people will learn from these stories and put together a realistic plan for fire safety."

"I'm incredibly proud to have been part of this project," said Dawn, "and to have met the nine participants who generously gave their time and stories to make this resource."

Copies of the DVD have been distributed to councils across Victoria, CFA's community education coordinators, and it's also available on our youtube.com channel, cfavic. ■

LODDON MALLEE INITIATIVE AWARDS

STORY LEITH HILLARD

This year four brigades and three groups have been awarded Loddon Mallee Region initiative awards.

In District 2, the Whipstick Group was acknowledged for its build-up and deployment of a trailer pump, with all brigades improving their pumping skills.

Based in Long Gully, the volunteer Community Education Group was recognised for its fire safety education sessions and its cooperation with the Gisborne Men's Shed to produce the Little Red Fire Truck.

Castlemaine brigade took the initiative to buy a thermal imaging camera which is now supported by a trained crew.

In District 18, Lake Boga brigade converted the motor room of the original fire station into an excellent meeting and training facility which local community groups are welcome to use.

Piangil brigade arranged rainwater saving and water recycling at its new station and also landscaped the surrounds in a show of community pride. The 30 brigade members are now planning their next project.

"We got the block next door to the station as a donation," said Second Lieutenant Des McFarlane. "We're planning to erect a shed for a tractor and slasher – we do a heap of slashing around town."

In District 20, the Terrick Group was acknowledged for providing strong operational leadership.



PHOTO COURTESY OF WARRANACRA NEWS

"Boundary alignment gave us the chance to do some things differently," said Terrick Group Officer Brendan Blake. "We've got a very large group area, so we've found people able and willing to step up and now have a deputy group officer for each of our south, east and west sectors, a first deputy group officer and a deputy group officer for community safety.

"We also have a mentoring structure to help along some enthusiastic new members who have grasped the nettle."

District 20's Corop West brigade also invested time and energy building up a 1,200-litre trailer unit to assist with mop up and to carry out planned burns. It was bought with the help of a donation from Powercor. ■

Above: Powercor hands a cheque to Corop West brigade with proceeds going towards a trailer

WODONGA RECRUIT CAMPAIGN TAKES TO THE AIRWAVES

STORY MATT JOHNSON

Right: (From left to right) Leading Firefighter Matt Johnson, Qualified Firefighter Claire Healy, Luisa Pelizzari, Second Lieutenant Gerard Peeters, Kev Poulton, Operations Officer Chris Bigham and Station Officer Ian Lilley

Border radio station 105.7 The River joined forces with Wodonga brigade in mid July to promote career and volunteer firefighting. Wodonga brigade is currently seeking new recruits and this year brigade members tried a different approach to getting the



PHOTO: ANDREW SCHULZ

message into the community. The brigade handed a recruitment message to radio station 105.7 The River to be read on air, and the morning team of Luisa Pelizzari and Kev Poulton jumped on board and offered their help.

Kev asked if he could come to the fire station and try out to be a firefighter for a week. A series of simulated firefighting challenges were set up based on the entry requirements for CFA career recruits, culminating in a shuttle run.

During the week, Luisa and Kev spoke on air about the role of a CFA firefighter, which was aimed at recruiting both career and volunteer members. Operations Officer Chris Bigham, who's in charge of recruit career firefighters at Fiskville Training College, was on hand in Wodonga to support the campaign. Chris spoke on air during a live cross about career and volunteer firefighting with CFA.

Fourth Lieutenant John Osmond, who's responsible for volunteer recruitment along with Leading Firefighter Matt Johnson and Qualified Firefighter Claire Healy, said, "Having 105.7 The River help promote our recruitment campaign has been great. We've been able to get our message out there to a wider group of people which is fantastic." ■

POOLAIJELO'S WORTHY LIFE MEMBER

STORY KEN FROST



PHOTO: KEN FROST

In honour of his long commitment to CFA and Poolaijelo brigade, Rodger Todd, an original member of the brigade, has been awarded a CFA life membership at the annual post fire season meeting of the brigade at Poolaijelo Hall.

He was humble about his time spent with CFA and his presentation with life membership by CFA District 17 Operations Officer Ian Day.

"It blew me away," said Rodger. "Obviously it was unexpected. There were no rumours about it at all.

"Ian stood up at the end and said, 'I have a presentation to make,'" Rodger recalled. "Then he started rattling off my history, I knew who he was talking about."

Rodger bought his farm at Poolaijelo in the early 1960s and was initially a member of Dergholm brigade. In 1972, Poolaijelo had enough interest to form its own brigade and split from Dergholm.

There were over 35 firefighters in the brigade then, which has now dropped to 15 active members. Rodger was appointed the first secretary/treasurer of the brigade, a role he has continued to hold to this day.

"Every farmer naturally joined their local brigade in those days," he said.

"There's not that many around these days as a lot of farmers have sold their farms for blue gum plantations and moved on," said Rodger.

Aged 76, Rodger has more or less retired as a firefighter, but he continues to make a contribution as the brigade's secretary/treasurer and regularly drives the truck on maintenance runs.

"I think if someone was keen to take over the secretary/treasurer role I wouldn't lose any sleep over stepping down." ■

PULLED FROM THE PATH OF FIRE

STORY SONIA MACLEAN

Merrigum brigade firefighter John Dozzi has received a special commendation for bravery, presented by the Campaspe Shire Mayor, during a ceremony at the Echuca Civic Centre.

John had been on the way home following his second tour at the Mount Hotham fire last summer, when he used his quick-thinking and steady resolve to help two injured firefighters. He moved a collapsed firefighter away from the path of an oncoming fire and treated him for severe smoke inhalation, and then treated an injured firefighter who was thought to have broken ribs, before helping the incident controller to take control of one of the sectors.

Robert Brown, a District 22 brigade support officer, said that John was a valuable asset to the brigade, both because of his commitment and his high-level first-aid background. "John is one of those people who goes above and beyond, and we at the district are really delighted that he was nominated," said Robert.

John takes up the story.

"On 7 February I was on my way home when I heard two maydays on the radio for a fire at Cooma, Victoria. As one of the maydays was from my brigade tanker I stopped at the fire to offer assistance as a firefighter. When I arrived, the Kyabram tanker – who also made a mayday call – came out of the smoke.

"A crew member on the Kyabram tanker was in serious need of medical attention and collapsed as he was getting off the truck.

"At this stage we were in a safe area, and I was able to assist him in my personal vehicle. However, the fire soon began to move towards us and we had to evacuate. That involved moving the member, myself and vehicle to another safe area where I monitored his vital signs and treated him as needed.



PHOTO: ROBERT BROWN

"I stayed with the member until the ambulance arrived then, shortly after, treated another firefighter for suspected broken ribs."

John has been a CFA member for 23 years, starting at Drysdale brigade in 1990. He is currently the communications officer at Merrigum brigade, where he has volunteered since 2009. He's also studying to become a paramedic. ■

Above: John Dozzi receiving his special commendation from Campaspe Shire Mayor Ian Maddison

DETERMINED JUNIORS RALLY FOR RAFFLE

STORY TRAVIS GRIFFITH

Six weeks, 2,500 tickets, \$12,500 raised. This was a mighty effort by the newly-formed Kinglake West Junior Fire Brigade, who went out to local markets in all weather with the goal of raising enough funds to kick-start and establish their program.

The fundraising drive – carried out with the aid of some willing senior members – certainly exceeded all expectations, with the raffle declared a sell out.

Three local businesses contributed to the prize – a specially made heavy-duty trailer painted fire engine red and loaded with red gum firewood and accessories.

The raffle is just one way that the newly-formed junior brigade has hit the ground running according to Travis Griffith, father of two of the children in the program.

“We’re well underway with the program and development of a competition team, which supports our strong focus on fitness, teamwork and participation,” Travis said.

“At the moment we have seven members, a mixture of boys and girls, and they are learning about CFA, brigade vehicles and equipment, communications, map reading, use of fire extinguishers, fire identification and use of pumps and hose work.

“The junior program is a great option for kids who want to get involved and enjoy the teamwork aspect. They are very keen and have already demonstrated real commitment through the raffle.

“I’ve been with CFA for about 28 years and I started as a junior myself, so I’m very pleased to see my kids as members of the junior brigade.



PHOTO: KAREN BARROW

“We want to thank the senior members for all their help and enthusiasm in getting behind us. It makes a huge difference,” Travis said.

The Kinglake West Junior Fire Brigade is a free program, with uniforms and equipment supplied. In addition to operations-related activities, members participate in specialty nights, excursions and day trips. ■

Above: Some of the juniors with the trailer raffle prize

ANGLESEA'S ENERGY-SAVING STATION

STORY CHARLOTTE AZZOPARDI

Anglesea brigade is now settling into the state’s most environmentally-friendly fire station following the official opening in mid August.

Brigade Captain Andy Rankin said members had worked tirelessly, dedicating many hours organising and attending meetings to ensure the community, business associations, CFA and government were aware of their vision and on board with the project.

“There is no known project of this size and nature attempted before by a volunteer fire brigade,” Andy said.

The Anglesea community raised \$450,000 of the \$1.9 million total cost. Andy said part of the community’s contribution came from the sale of bricks for the station.

“Members of the public purchased a brick, which they had the option of engraving with a personal message. It was a chance for people to be part of the station’s history and is a great feature of the new building,” he said.

The station is a zero net emissions building with a range of water and energy-saving features.

“We have on-site electricity generation with a wind turbine and solar photovoltaic cells, which could generate twice the electricity requirement for the building,” Andy said.

“Water tanks collect rainwater which is treated onsite to drinking standards by UV sanitising and filtration.

The tank water will also be used for toilet flushing, cleaning and training purposes, effectively running the whole station.”

CFA’s Manager Environmental Sustainability Darlene Pentland said an energy management system would also monitor the energy efficiency of the building.

“It will measure incoming electricity from the grid and energy generated from the solar panels and the wind turbine,” Darlene said.

“The system will also calculate the carbon footprint associated with energy use within the building. All information will be displayed on a screen in the foyer – providing a learning tool for brigade members and community users of the facility.” ■



PHOTO: DARLENE PENTLAND

FEEDING THE MASSES

STORY MEGAN ANGEL

It was the arrival of cold food being served to exhausted firefighters at a large factory fire in Dandenong in 1993 that led to the idea of the Narre Warren catering unit.

Narre Warren brigade set out to provide a hearty, cost-effective meal for firefighters at large incidents, and the catering unit is now a common and welcome sight around Southern Metropolitan Region.

When the brigade bought a decommissioned Isuzu salvage vehicle, the catering unit was up and running. But it wasn't long before the members realised that a purpose-built trailer would increase their efficiency and enable them to feed larger groups of people. So in 2007, using funds raised specifically for this purpose, the brigade ordered the \$35,000 trailer.



PHOTOS: KEITH PAKEMHAM

With a five-burner gas barbecue, fridge and a 2 KVA generator, the unit can serve 150 people in one seating. It has hand washing facilities and prides itself on using full waste recovery methods, ensuring no waste is left at the scene.

The unit attends around 45 fires and incidents a year and, as its popularity grows, the members who run the unit are also receiving at least 20 requests a year from CFA and other agencies to service corporate meetings and events. The trailer enables the brigade to provide a diverse menu that is varied depending on the circumstances.

It takes many dedicated people to provide this sort of support to our firefighters and currently the unit has more than 30 volunteers ready to assist 24 hours a day, seven days a week. More than half of those members became CFA volunteers solely to work for the catering unit.

"It has given members of our community the opportunity to be a part of CFA and know they are helping the emergency responders do their job. We also have volunteers from other brigades in the Casey Group helping us. It's a real group effort," said Catering Coordinator James Conquest. ■

LOCALS VOTE FOR BELLBRAE BRIGADE

STORY CHARLOTTE AZZOPARDI

Around 40 members from Torquay brigade gathered in the neighbouring township of Bellbrae in mid July to warmly welcome CFA's handover of the newly-constructed Bellbrae Fire Station.

CFA Barwon South West Asset Maintenance Coordinator Tim Humpage said the builder, BMI Developments, had done a great job and the new station was well finished, was on time and on budget.

Bellbrae has traditionally operated as a satellite of Torquay brigade, but in late July the community voted unanimously to establish a standalone fire brigade in the town. This decision will now be put to the CFA Board for approval.

The proposal was put forward because of an increase in infrastructure and residential growth in Torquay.

"The demographics are changing," Surf Coast Shire Mayor Libby Coker said. "Torquay is growing and becoming more urbanised, whereas Bellbrae will remain more rural.

"Bellbrae brigade will link Torquay and Anglesea and will fill a much-needed gap to protect our communities from bushfire," she said.

Torquay Captain Phil Campbell was pleased with the community's decision, saying that Bellbrae has its own needs and now there will be CFA members specifically for the urban area and a separate group for the rural area.

Phil predicts his brigade will lose about 15 members to Bellbrae brigade, but Torquay brigade will gain a few new members who are doing their Minimum Skills training. ■



PHOTO: ALEXIS VIROSS

STAY SAFE WHEN HANDLING ITEMS

STORY JEFF GREEN

Many injuries that occur at CFA involve manual handling activities, such as lifting and moving items, that would often be seen as straightforward. But we tend to underestimate the hazards in many simple tasks.

Injuries from manual handling range from minor sprains to debilitating injuries where the person might have ongoing physical limitations.

It's well understood what causes manual handling injuries and this helps us to predict situations or tasks that are more likely to be hazardous. The same information can also be used to design equipment to minimise these risks.

CFA has been working for many years to control manual handling hazards. However, it's not possible to fully control all activities and tasks, particularly those performed by firefighters in emergency conditions.

Reducing injury risks requires individuals to understand the risks and take steps to eliminate or reduce them. Using awkward postures and movements at the same time as moderate to high-force exertion is the greatest concern.

Awkward postures and exertion combine most often when firefighters are removing equipment from trucks and carrying and handling equipment on the fireground and at the fire station. Injuries can also happen when items are being removed or placed in cupboards or on shelving in store rooms.

Here are some tips to reduce the risks from manual handling injuries. Limit excessive movement of your back and shoulders by:

- positioning your body as close as possible to the item being handled. This may involve sliding or dragging the item towards



PHOTO: JEFF GREEN

you so it's as close as possible before you lift it up or grasp it to handle it

- bracing your body by supporting yourself with one hand grasping a solid, nearby structure and handling the item with your other hand
- maintaining the curves of your back by using greater hip and knee movement. Most forward trunk movement (flexion) should be from the hip, not the back.

Avoid moderate to high-force exertion by:

- reducing the weight of the object
- reducing the number of items carried or handled
- using a trolley
- team handling
- using slow and steady movements
- using leg and trunk movement to move the object, rather than using arms and shoulders
- handling and moving items in forward/backward and up/down directions. Avoid movements across your body. ■

Above: Use team handling to share the load and reduce the level of force exerted

MANAGING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

STORY PAUL HUGGETT

By now you may have noticed the 'Manage your mental health' card included in this edition of *Brigade* magazine. While the main purpose of the card is to provide members with the new phone number for CFA's Member Assistance Program, the thinking behind the program itself has changed in some fundamental ways.

"There's a stronger emphasis on helping members manage their own mental health," said Tanya Di Michele, the project's coordinator. "It begins with encouraging people to protect their mental health, thinking about issues before they become a problem – so prevention and preparation."

The revamped program focuses on what Tanya called "more solution-focused counselling. It's about giving people concrete strategies to manage stress and tools to deal with the challenges of life."

While the services provided through the Member Assistance Program remain short-term in nature, Tanya said the program's sessions are designed with members' longer-term needs in mind.

"It's critical to help people identify the approaches and services that will be the best fit for them."

The new Member Assistance Program can be accessed by calling 1300 795 711 and is available 24 hours a day.

In addition to the Member Assistance Program, CFA provides the following services to support members and their families:

- Peer support can be accessed through the rostered duty officer, officer in charge, line manager or peer coordinator
- Chaplains can be contacted directly or by contacting Converge International on 1800 337 068. ■





PETER CREAK
HUME ACTING REGIONAL COMMANDER

While 1 July marked the start of a new financial year, for many of our members it was the beginning of a new term of office as a newly-elected leader in their brigade or group. In some brigades and groups, there has been a changing of the guard, with newly-elected captains, lieutenants, secretaries, community engagement leaders and deputy and group officers.

I would like to thank our existing leaders who are moving on to new roles or stepping aside for their contribution, and congratulate our new leaders and thank them for stepping up and taking on this challenge through increasingly changing and complex times. This step into a newly-elected role can be both an exciting and daunting time for new officers.

One of the factors that makes the transition to these new leadership roles easier is support and encouragement from former leaders of brigades and groups who can provide good, solid advice. The wisdom and organisational knowledge held by current and former leaders needs to be shared, to help newer leaders meet the challenges that lie ahead.

In Hume Region when our Fire and Emergency Management staff visit brigades for Section 29 inspections, there is generally a good discussion about the 'people strength' of a brigade, both in the training context with the brigade operational skills profile and for the current and future viability of the brigade. One of the key questions about the future viability of a brigade is where will the next generation of leaders come from? For a newly-elected leader, it may seem strange to talk about the future leadership group. But just as our existing and former leaders identified potential future leaders, and nurtured them so they were ready for a leadership role, you as a leader in your brigade or group, have a responsibility to identify and develop members who may take over key leadership roles.

On the subject of our people changing roles, I would like to use this column to recognise the contribution of Hume Region staff who recently retired or retire soon. Operations Officers Peter Brereton and John Smith, Brigade Administrative Support Officer Phil Park, Fire Safety Officer David Parker, Admin Support Officer Neil Brock and Manager Training and Development Brian Lawrence, have collectively contributed around 220 years of service as both staff and volunteers to CFA. They've been part of the evolution of CFA to the mature and complex fire and emergency management organisation that it is today.

Importantly, the skills, knowledge and wisdom of these members won't be lost to CFA. Four of these valued staff members will continue their CFA association as brigade volunteers in the Hume Region, and will continue to contribute as firefighters, fire investigators and incident management team members for many years to come. ■



DON KELLY
GRAMPIANS REGIONAL DIRECTOR

The pilot administration hub at Warracknabeal Fire Station is now fully operational. The hub services 17 entities including 13 brigades, Warracknabeal Group, and Warracknabeal brigade's auxiliary, juniors and social club.

The hub was set up in October 2012 in response to a call for help from fire brigades in District 17's Warracknabeal Group. Over recent years, some brigades in the group have come under pressure to remain viable because of general time pressures on our day-to-day lives, a decline in the rural population and an ageing demographic.

Establishing an administrative hub is seen as a positive step towards supporting brigades by reducing the administrative burden associated with maintaining brigades in small, rural communities. The hub combines the administrative roles by providing one secretary and one treasurer for all 17 entities.

Sharon McLean has been appointed as secretary of the hub and Nadine Whelan as treasurer. Group Officer Colin Newell has been instrumental in leading and coordinating the transition to the new arrangements. Warracknabeal brigade has supported the pilot by providing an office in the Warracknabeal Fire Station for the hub.

Some of the features of the new hub are:

- a single bank account shared by all entities
- investing consolidated funds in term deposits and using the Commonwealth Bank's Brigade Maximiser Account to get higher interest income
- using Xero Online Accounting System which automatically imports transactions from the Commonwealth bank account. Each entity's financial activity is accounted for separately via the system's Cost Centre Tracking functionality, and the individual equity of each entity is maintained within a consolidated balance sheet
- individual brigade financial reports are provided while maintaining confidentiality
- a plan for brigades to meet in clusters to reduce the number of meetings and to share ideas
- a single point of contact for correspondence and contact from stakeholders.

Thank you to the members, brigades, group, district and region for your support in getting this pilot project up and running. The pilot will run until June 2014, when a review of its long-term application will be made.

For further information please contact Glenn Tyler, Manager Business Services on 5329 5521 or email g.tyler@cfa.vic.gov.au. ■



DAVID BAKER
EASTERN METROPOLITAN
REGIONAL DIRECTOR

I am always a little amused when friends outside CFA comment that it must be a quiet time for us given there are no bushfires. Anyone connected with CFA knows nothing could be further from the truth – indeed it seems we are always busy but become even busier during the summer season.

During the winter months our brigades still respond to structure fires and emergencies. Our members continue to train to hone their skills and keep their equipment, gear and stations maintained. Our road accident rescue brigades turn out to motor vehicle collisions all year-round and our educators are out and about throughout the year ensuring people know how to be fire safe at home and preparing them for the summer season.

In addition, our members are working hard in the background on a range of CFA and other agencies' initiatives around planning and preparing for emergencies including community refuges, community sirens, local response plans and municipal fire prevention planning.

With the arrival of much-anticipated new vehicles during winter, our members are kept busy upgrading their skills in using the state-of-the-art equipment, and much planning and development work is being done by brigades and staff to continue the rollout of the appliance program.

As I write, Rowville and Hillcrest brigades are seeing their new homes rise out of the ground and work is continuing in earnest to deliver more new stations this financial year, and prepare for an ongoing program of station builds and upgrades over the next 10 years.

It's certainly not a quiet time and as our usual business continues unabated, we embark on another phase of ongoing change within the organisation. These changes are focused on two critical elements to best prepare us for delivering services to our communities: delivering business improvements and creating an effective operating model.

No change comes without some adjustment to the way we do things and these current changes compel us to question and review our existing operating models.

It's vital that we remain focused on our core business and ensure we create a structure and operating model that sees our front-line volunteer members properly supported to ensure they can perform at their best. It is also vital that we don't forget we're an organisation of people who deliver emergency services to our communities. I encourage our members to consider, discuss and contribute their views around the proposed changes in order to influence the changes.

In the meantime, it's essential that we look out for each other and not lose sight of the fundamental reason why we serve – to protect lives and property. ■



MIKE WASSING
LODDON MALLEE
REGIONAL DIRECTOR

Over the past few months, there have been several major exercises in Loddon Mallee Region.

Exercise North Abel was a counterterrorism exercise run across multiple sites in the region and included tactical deployment of several hundred personnel as well as senior regional command and control personnel. A similar regional-based flood exercise was held in Bendigo and this resulted in more than 100 people attending from across the state and bordering regions.

These exercises were extremely beneficial in testing our emergency management arrangements and protocols and, as always, provided a great opportunity to develop relationships. However, the real benefit was the opportunity for people – staff and volunteers – from numerous agencies, government departments and private companies to rehearse.

To remain successful, there are several things we must continue to do:

- relationships need to be strong, based on collaboration, shared advocacy and common purpose
- plans need to be realistic and developed in conjunction with the desired outcomes in mind
- we must rehearse.

But what's the difference between rehearsing and practising?

Practising is an inherently personal approach. This may be personal to the individual or personal due to situational factors. Either way, practise is aimed at improving knowledge, skills and attributes of the individual.

Rehearsal on the other hand is designed to ensure that all individuals learning and the details of the desired outcome (for example, a safe and effective attack on a fire edge) are adequately prepared and coordinated.

We have always prided ourselves on our ability to be good at what we do. Our people regularly spend hours every week learning new skills and refining existing ones so we can be at our best when required. This is just as relevant for our prevention and preparedness capability as it is for response. However, we must equally focus on undertaking these activities in collaboration with others and bringing together the individual practised skills, and thereby rehearsing for likely scenarios we will face.

There are many great examples of existing rehearsals, including small duration drills for firefighters, incident management team readiness exercises based on likely scenarios for a day of high fire danger, and many more. We need to continue to extend the principles of these types of rehearsal to our prevention, mitigation activities, as well as relief and recovery, and ensure that our first consideration in planning for such rehearsals is based on a multi-agency collaborative basis.

In the same way an orchestra will use rehearsals to provide listeners with the best possible performance, we must use the same process to ensure the delivery of all our services is the best it can be for the community. ■



BOB BARRY
BARWON SOUTH WEST
REGIONAL DIRECTOR

Reducing the risk of fire and improving resilience in the event of an emergency is not up to any one individual or group. It requires a team effort from CFA volunteers and staff, other agencies, media, community groups, businesses, tourism operators, individuals – the list is extensive.

Several projects the community development team has been involved with across Barwon South West have shown what can be achieved through shared responsibility and collaboration.

Near the South Australian border at Casterton, SES, in partnership with CFA and other agencies, engaged with the community to produce a localised calendar that promotes a different aspect of emergency prevention and preparation each month. As a new month turned over with a fire safety message, the CFA community education team supported the project with local media and newsletter articles, themed shop window displays and education programs.

In the small coastal township of Yambuk during the July school holidays, local brigade volunteers hosted the annual children's activity day to develop leadership skills among junior brigade members and involve local community members. It's supported by CFA's community education presenters and the catchment team. The Yambuk Kids Day raises awareness about fire safety and provides an opportunity to share information with parents.

In early August, the CFA stand at the major agricultural event Hamilton Sheepvention was well supported by local volunteers and catchment teams. Some of the new display resources promoting 'Partnerships – Sharing Responsibility' were showcased. These resources are available to brigades for use in their own displays to encourage communities to prepare for the upcoming fire season.

In the foothills of the Otways National Park, District 6's Corangamite Group volunteers and community representatives have proactively addressed their concerns about the lack of preparation for bushfire risk by local residents, despite the many forms of engagement by CFA and other agencies. There are also specific risks around the Otways that make engagement with the public more difficult. For example, a high number of absentee landholders and increased numbers of tourists during holiday season, which coincides with the fire season.

In partnership with the community development team and the District 6 Planning Committee, the group recently held a Community Engagement Forum, which built on current strengths and identified opportunities to improve current methods of engagement, explored other effective ways to support communities and individuals to take action, and developed a local plan.

Yes, partnerships are alive and well in Barwon South West! It is only through working together, supporting each other and sharing responsibility that we build readiness and resilience in the event of emergencies. ■



MARK POTTER
GIPPSLAND
REGIONAL DIRECTOR

Based on advice from volunteers and staff across Gippsland, we've announced a range of actions to reform training. This will ensure that those with the expertise and who are trusted by their brigade can increase their opportunity to deliver training. Some of the quick hits include better access to training materials including PowerPoint presentations, learning and assessment strategies, better mentoring support and improved access to qualified assessors.

It's important to note that most brigades in Gippsland already operate comprehensive training programs. In the future, brigades will be supported in developing their training programs to better obtain competencies and qualifications at the completion of the various sections. In a number of cases, the current brigade training calendars will only require minor modification, if any at all. This will give brigades a greater ability to determine their own training needs. In addition, where the expertise exists, brigades will be empowered to deliver the appropriate training to their members.

The key changes to support increased delivery of training include:

- the creation of a Volunteer Trainer Panel that will provide support for all trainers through peer support, access to training materials and support by staff instructors.
- the creation of a Volunteer Assessor Panel that will support all endorsed assessors across Gippsland with assessment materials and mentoring.
- increased accessibility to training materials to enable volunteers and staff to deliver training programs locally. These materials will include presentations, learning manuals and training techniques.
- fire and Emergency Management, in particular operations managers, who will provide input into the annual training calendar. This will ensure that there's a connection between the outcomes of Section 29 inspections and future training calendars.
- recognition that the brigade captain is empowered to determine who within their brigade can deliver training.

To achieve this, I would like to make two important points. First, volunteers can train volunteers. This has been occurring for many decades and will be strengthened. Second, you don't have to undertake formal training to then be eligible to be assessed. If you or your brigade captain believes you have enough experience developed through brigade training programs, attendance at incidents or through participation in exercises, you can ask to be assessed.

We need your feedback to ensure the changes are working and the ability to deliver training in Gippsland is significantly improved. I encourage you to give your feedback about these changes to your local staff member.

Where support is required, the training team is available to work with brigades to further improve the quality of training. ■



GREG ESNOUF NORTHERN AND WESTERN METROPOLITAN REGIONAL DIRECTOR

Recently, the Shire of Nillumbik Fire Prevention Committee unanimously agreed to transfer its authority under the CFA Act to the Municipal Fire Management Planning Committee under the Integrated Fire Management Planning process. This has been a challenging and difficult journey that has involved many hours of work by a number of people in local brigades, CFA staff, Department of Environment and Primary Industries, Parks Victoria, MFB and the Shire of Nillumbik.

I congratulate all those involved for their professionalism and dedication to achieve the end result. In particular, I would like to thank our volunteer leaders – Stephen Gaunt and David McGahy – plus the Nillumbik and Whittlesea/Diamond Valley Groups and their brigades for their leadership and commitment to the journey. I also thank Manager Community Safety David Allen and his team, Regional IFMP Network Manager Kris Perkovic and Planning Coordinator Zoe McDonald for their continued support.

The new era of fire management planning is now implemented across our region, with all municipalities now having transferred to the new committee structure. This is a milestone and we need to be proud of this achievement.

Our challenge now is to continue the momentum and reap the benefits of the new strategic approach at a municipal and regional level. If we focus on good harmonious communication flow, building strong relationships with our partner agencies, ongoing brigade involvement through its group representatives, and ensure we focus on delivering well-planned, effective fire prevention/preparedness to our communities, there will be even greater community safety outcomes.

On a different tack, sometimes you get a bad feeling in your bones. Driving around recently, I've been constantly reminded about how this winter feels very much like the winter of 1982, which of course led to large bushfires from November 1982 and then Ash Wednesday in February 1983. My gut feeling is backed up by recent weather records showing that three-quarters of the state has nine-month rainfall figures in the lowest 30 per cent of all years on record, and half the state (mostly in the west) is in the lowest 10 per cent of all rainfall records. Weather experts are predicting a 60-70 per cent chance of above-average spring rainfall – fingers crossed that they're right. Otherwise, we will need to be vigilant and ensure we're prepared for an early and, possibly long, summer.

Many of the proposed actions outlined in Creating Our Future Together result in significant changes in how we do our business and, while these will pose challenges to us, we need to focus on how we can deliver the best possible service to the community we protect with the available resources. I encourage every member of CFA to consider the proposal and provide feedback either online or via brigade or district representatives. ■



PETER SCHMIDT SOUTHERN METROPOLITAN REGIONAL DIRECTOR

This year's Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) District 8 Leaders Forum, held in late July, was one of the best attended and, judging by the level of positive feedback received, a very successful event. The highlight of the day was the attendance of Claire Higgins, the Acting Chair of CFA's Board, who gave an insightful and informative speech based around Creating Our Future Together from the Board's perspective.

Claire's professional and well-informed address provided attendees a clear recognition of the need for change in CFA, while instilling members with a greater understanding of the Board's strategy and direction. We were also honoured to have Claire remain at the forum, to take an active role in the open forum where a variety of issues were raised.

The insights into the Board's direction were also a great lead in to a presentation on the Creating the Future Together concepts and the implications for brigades and districts.

The forum is also the stage for the presentation of the district's prestigious Bob Burgess Complete Firefighter Award. This award is in honour of the legend Bob Burgess, who exemplified true leadership and whose involvement in CFA positively impacted the development of many brigade and group leaders. Bob sadly passed away in 1993, but the legacy he left lives on. His widow Bev, who is also a long-serving stalwart of CFA, presented the award. This year, the award was given for both 2012 and 2013. The worthy recipients were Deputy Group Officer Steve Hicks from Cardinia Group and Graham Simpson, ex-captain of Cockatoo. Coincidentally, both served closely with Bob through the 1980s and early 1990s, which made the award even more special to them.

I congratulate the VFBV District 8 Council Executive, led by President and ex-captain John Watson, and Brigade Administrative Support Coordinator Kerry Laurie, who coordinated the day, for an excellently planned and conducted event.

The Regional Management Team is greatly involved with the forum because it has a very strong partnership with the VFBV Council, and this collaborative approach, taken through such events, helps to inform and support brigade members.

There's no doubt that strong partnerships are an absolute key to our success in building safer communities. These relationships must never be overlooked in their critical importance to achieving our goals in almost all aspects of our service.

As we lead into another summer fire season, I implore all members to prepare well and, above all, support and look out for each other. Remember, your safety and your families' welfare comes first. ■

EMERGENCY MEMBERLINK

Your Emergency Memberlink Program is a way for us to recognise your commitment and contribution to emergency services and Victorian communities.

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

- accommodation
- home and garden
- attractions
- retail
- dining
- technology
- financial services
- travel
- health and beauty
- wine

Details of the offers are in the Emergency Memberlink Guide, which is posted with all new Memberlink cards, and they are also on the emergencymemberlink.com.au website.



CONTACT MEMBERLINK

To get a Memberlink card, phone 1800 820 037 or register online at emergencymemberlink.com.au.

The Memberlink team welcomes feedback about the Memberlink 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 Facebook page – facebook.com/emergency-memberlink.

POPULAR OFFERS

- Discounted rates and reduced insurance excess with **AVIS** car rental.
- 10% discount off a regular excursion train fare on Australia's favourite steam train **Puffing Billy**.
- Buy all your plants and garden products at true wholesale prices from **Plantmark**, Australia's largest wholesale nursery.
- Members receive discounted passenger fares when sailing on **Spirit of Tasmania**. Visit your Emergency Memberlink website for current offer.
- 5% discount on pre-purchased **Gift Cards** including WISH, Coles, Ray's Outdoors, Supercheap Auto, BCF and Rebel Sport.
- Trade cash prices on **Burson Auto Parts** full product range within Victoria.
- Free medium drink (soft drink, orange juice or standard espresso pronto) with any purchase over \$3.00 at any **McDonalds** restaurants in Victoria. Terms and conditions apply.
- Protect you and your family on your next trip. Save 40% on travel insurance with **AIG**.
- Exclusive access to trade prices on audio visual, white goods, kitchen appliances and home appliances through **Harvey Norman Commercial** Projects Division.
- 12% discount on **HCF's** retail range of hospital and extras cover.
- Connect to **Elgas** and receive \$100 worth of gas credits plus much more. New Elgas customers only. Visit your Emergency Memberlink website for terms and conditions.
- **Flight Centre** is offering \$50 off your next international booking at any Flight Centre Victorian store.
- 10% off **Sovereign Hill** day entry for members and their immediate families.
- Purchase any **AVG** product on line and receive 15% off the RRP – ultimate protection of everything you do online.
- For those wishing to get off the beaten track, members receive 10% off most land tours with **Intrepid Travel**.
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- 10% off best available rates with **Best Western** Hotels Australasia.
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5-10% Discount



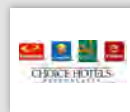
10-25% Discount off RRP



Exclusive Offers



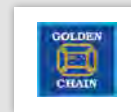
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ROYAL MELBOURNE SHOW

The Royal Agricultural Society of Victoria (RASV) would like to make a special offer to CFA members for the 2013 Royal Melbourne Show.

The RASV through the Show, is making a special gesture as it has done in past years, to recognise Victorian volunteers and members of the emergency services who have a strong and positive impact at the Show and/or in regional and rural areas, which are the RASV's main constituency.

The RASV would like to offer volunteers, their families and staff a discounted price of \$24 for adults, \$19 for concession and \$15 for children to attend the 2013 Royal Melbourne Show.

Simply show your Emergency Memberlink Card at the Show ticket box office to obtain the discounted rates.



THE FARM STORE

The Farm Store makes it easier for farmers and families to buy farming supplies. Whether you're in the suburbs with some chooks, or a farmer on a huge station in rural Australia, The Farm Store's website is built for you. With over 100,000 products online, the range changes daily.

Emergency Memberlink members receive 10% off all items from The Farm Store all year round.

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Free shipping on orders over \$200 weighing under 20kg.

Visit www.thefarmstore.com.au or call 1300 463 276



MEMBERLINK BOX OFFICE

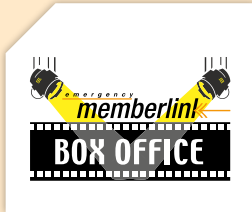
Save \$\$\$ by pre-purchasing movie, theme park and attraction tickets through the Memberlink Box Office.

Hoyts – Village – Palace – Reading – Imax – Moonlight – Eureka Tower – Melbourne Aquarium – Queensland Theme Parks.

The Memberlink Box Office is operated by Spendless.

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Purchase your tickets via www.spendless.net.au/memberlink or call directly on 1800 352 600

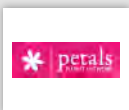


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HEAVY RESCUE CHALLENGES

STORY KEITH PAKENHAM

PHOTOS: KEITH PAKENHAM



This exercise was all about volunteers training volunteers – Russell is the only staff member on the CFA Rescue Association Executive. All members of the training committee deserve high praise as it took around six months to plan the training, and Russell’s effort, skill and knowledge over the weekend made it a huge success.

The Sunday session pushed crews with more complex scenarios including two workers trapped under a forklift, a victim trapped beneath the rear wheel of a tractor, an industrial accident with workers overcome by cleaning fumes inside pipes and a car on its side after hitting a train.

The challenge of the day was a car balanced over the edge of an embankment following a collision with a truck carrying concrete pipes. Several people, including a baby, were trapped in the car. Stabilisation was a crucial part of this incident, with crews all working as a large team to achieve success.

In the future, other emergency services and organisations may take part in this specialised training, and car manufacturers are also interested in exchanging knowledge about vehicle design and rescue techniques.

The team would love to receive donations of disused farming equipment including tractors, headers and conveyors, plus industrial equipment such as augers or any equipment that could cause entrapment. Contact Kevin Chisholm (0418 335 664) or Darryl Wells (0417 034 380) with donation details. ■

The CFA Rescue Association organised a heavy rescue training weekend in mid July at Fiskville to challenge the skills of CFA members from around the state.

The course covered the basics of scene preservation, inner and outer circle work, glass management, stabilisation and tool work.

“The idea is to do this as methodically as possible because most of the props we have here are much larger and more complicated than you would find at a normal road accident rescue training ground session, and a lot more skill and teamwork is required to complete these tasks,” said instructor Russell Gray.

“By having representatives from each group, once we get the process down pat we will have consistent methods right across the state.”

More than 50 CFA members worked on new ideas to challenge them not just with conventional car versus car incidents, but also with heavy vehicles into cars and other significant impacts. Russell said they have taken the scenarios to a higher level, using a wide variety of incidents, to force them to think outside the square.

Industrial incidents have also been added to this training because many towns have become industrialised and the risk of entrapments will increase.

Above left: Practising a rescue in a tight space

Above right: Course Instructor Russell Gray

Below: One of the car rescue scenarios



PHOTO: CHRIS THOM

CAPTAINS AND LIEUTENANTS PICK UP TIPS

STORY KRIS WILMS

PHOTO: ZOE HENNESSY



Northern and Western Metropolitan Region held an induction workshop for captains and first lieutenants in late June.

This new initiative for District 14 is a result of feedback from participants in District 14's Captains and First Lieutenants Peer Mentor Program, and was developed to complement the Mentor Program, which is in its second year.

Operations Manager Rohan Luke and Manager Learning and Development Natalie Kenely planned the training day with Kris Wilms, who developed the new program.

The day was attended by captains and first lieutenants in their first or second leadership term, and also included representation from other captains and first lieutenants who have a range of broad leadership experience.

The theme for the day was 'establishing relationships, making connections, building networks and developing resources' and was divided into a number of sessions.

Each functional manager from the Regional Leadership Team (RLT) gave a short overview of key aspects of their role, highlighting relevant links to the senior volunteer leadership roles. The RLT and VFBV President Chris Maries also formed a panel for a question-and-answer session.

During the afternoon, there were discussion group activities with table groups comprising captains, first lieutenants, RLT members, operations officers and group officers. Each group worked through four human resources (HR) scenarios provided by HR Manager Sam Chhay, which represented common interpersonal, communication and disciplinary issues experienced in brigades. This was a great opportunity for sharing knowledge and gaining practical information to manage common HR matters.

A reference kit was also given to participants, containing the kinds of resources other captains and first lieutenants said they would have found useful when they first moved into this challenging role. ■

BUSES ATTACKED IN LODDON MALLEE REGION

STORY JADE HASLAM

A counterterrorism exercise was launched in late May when Victoria Police received notification of a credible threat to public transport in regional Victoria. This led to incident police operations centres (IPOCs) being set up at Bendigo and Mildura.

Public transport buses at each location came under chemical attack, which affected 35 passengers on each bus.

Victoria Police was the control agency and was required to carry out an appropriate response, along with CFA, Ambulance Victoria, SES, Red Cross, local government, Public Transport Victoria, and state government departments.

There were around 200 participants at the Bendigo site and 130 at Mildura, which included observers, players and response crews. The exercise was a success and has identified various learnings and opportunities to be incorporated into general business.

One of the key successes was the diversity of the participants. The players were medical students from La Trobe University and Sunraysia Institute of Tafe who volunteered their time to be part of the exercise. A number of the students volunteered to go through the decontamination process, which involved being showered down outside with cold water despite the chilly weather.

The exercise was filmed by local students from Girton Grammar School Bendigo and Bendigo South East Secondary College and formed part of their course.

Before the exercise, information sessions about how to deal with terrorism and chemical/biological radiological (CBR) type incidents were held in Mildura and Bendigo. Almost 200 members have completed this refresher training. ■



PHOTO: COURTESY OF VICTORIA POLICE

LEARNING TO USE A LADDER PLATFORM

STORY TROY LONGSON



PHOTO: TROY LONGSON

Narracan Group in District 9 travelled to Gippsland TAFE in Newborough at the end of June to learn about the capabilities of Traralgon brigade's ladder platform.

The day kicked off with Group Officer Damien Howard saying that the main focus of the day was to make sure the group understood the requirements of the ladder platform and how to use it in a firefight. Gippsland brigades no longer have to wait for a ladder platform to come from the metropolitan area since the Traralgon ladder platform became operational earlier this year.

Members found out which vehicles were needed to supply water to the ladder platform, how many vehicles were needed to use it to its best ability, and the importance of pre-planning the placement of vehicles to allow the ladder platform to locate without upsetting the current firefight.

This training also gave members the opportunity to look at other vehicles within their group and surrounding groups, including going for a drive and operating equipment to discover whether one of these vehicles would suit their needs.

One of the main aims of the day was for members to take this new information back to their own brigades and work on their pre-plans to accommodate the ladder platform into a firefight. "It's available so let's use it and don't be afraid," said Damien Howard.

Experienced and newer members also tried their hand at compressed air breathing apparatus training.

The day ended with crews going back to Newborough Fire Station for a barbecue cooked by members from Longwarry and District brigade.

Special thanks to the staff and volunteers from Traralgon brigade for taking the time to show the ladder platform and breathing apparatus van. ■

ALL-HAZARDS APPROACH IN ACTION

STORY BRIAN BRADY

CFA members from District 8 recently attended an intense five-day course at the Australian Emergency Management Institute at Mount Macedon, to take part in the marine oil spill response incident management team (IMT) course run by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority.

Given the amount of coastline along southern Victoria and its busy shipping lanes, along with the ports of Geelong, Western Port and Portland, there's a chance of a marine oil spill in the future and CFA would likely have a role to play in the clean-up.

In addition to Bass Coast Group Officer Damien O'Connor, Operations Manager John Maguire and Operations Officer Brian Brady, course participants included wildlife carers, marine harbour masters and pilots, Environment Protection Authority personnel and police.

CFA's involvement in such an incident would be to provide IMT personnel and help clean up the shoreline, which can be physically demanding, remote and protracted. The response to a spill is very different from the usual fire service response, as there are many organisations with an interest and a say in how the response will be conducted.

A follow-up multi-agency practical day was held in mid July at Williamstown to demonstrate the equipment involved in a clean-up.

To find out more about the complexities of a marine oil spill response, go to amsa.gov.au and search for 'Iron Baron oil spill'. In 1995, Iron Baron ran aground on a reef in Bass Strait on its way to Launceston. ■

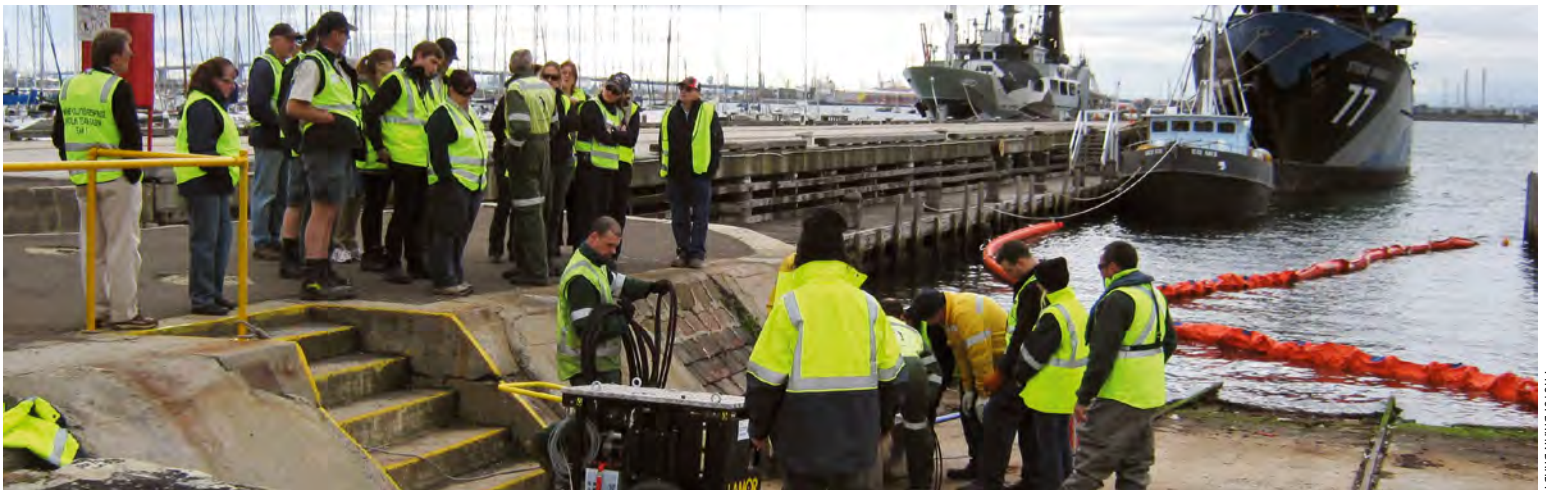


PHOTO: BRIAN BRADY



PHOTO: ROSS JENKIN

DAYLESFORD TACKLES HOUSE FIRE RISK

STORY SONIA MACLEAN

Daylesford members teamed up with the local Mitre 10 this winter to raise awareness about fire risks in the home.

Captain Koala, a fire truck and a barbecue all proved irresistible drawcards for kids, which gave parents the perfect chance to talk to brigade members about home fire safety.

"There are all kinds of things people can do around the home, including not overloading power boards and turning off the stove when they leave the kitchen," said Daylesford member Heatheranne Bullen.

"The Mitre 10 day saw great support from the brigade – everyone who was available came. There were members in the shop, out on the street and behind the scenes at the fire station. Members of the brigade show incredible initiative – they always work well beyond the call of duty.

"The hardware store has been associated with the brigade for some time now, (Manager Ross Jenkin is Glenlyon Group secretary and his son and another staff member are in the brigade), and always do their bit to promote fire safety messages," Heatheranne said.

Daylesford firefighter Len Bartlett, who along with Paul Anderson and Dick Patterson recently joined celebrity chef Alla Wolf-Tasker at her Lake House restaurant to talk about fire prevention, said the brigade saw a fair number of kitchen fires.

"Rangehoods are a big problem because they often get a build-up of fat and oil that can't be seen easily. So people ignore it, and they can catch fire and cause major problems," said Len. "We also tend to have a spate of call-outs at the start of winter when people light their fireplaces for the first time." ■

Above: Daylesford brigade members engage the community at Mitre 10

LIFE AFTER TRUCKS

STORY GERARD SCHOLTEN

More than 580 years of combined service to CFA and the community was celebrated at a dinner honouring 18 'living legends' and their partners.

The celebration of members from CFA's Eastern Metropolitan Region acknowledged the service and commitment of long-standing volunteers who may no longer be able to jump on the back of a truck but still contribute their wealth of knowledge and skills to the up-and-coming volunteers and recruits and their community.

CFA Eastern Metropolitan Regional Director Dave Baker said it was vital that the enormous skills and experience of the legends wasn't lost when long-standing members decided to take a less active role.

"As CFA continues to shape its service in an evolving joined-up emergency management sector, our members will be faced with the challenges that arise from change," he said.

"More so than ever, our living legends provide the foundational strength to this diverse organisation and we will need to call upon their wisdom and guidance as we chart our course through unfamiliar waters."

It's the second time the region has reached out to this group and their partners, and the theme of this year's event was 'Life

after the BRT (big red truck)'. Members were presented with a Life After Trucks card, to encourage them to be involved in operational support roles where they could continue their valuable contribution.

Deputy Chief Officer Steve Warrington delivered the keynote address at the dinner. "It's important that maturity and knowledge are not lost to CFA simply due to changed personal situations such as health or competing priorities," Steve said.

"I commend District 13 staff for this excellent initiative and encourage others to consider how to access, recognise and support long-serving members who have so much to offer CFA." ■

Below: Living Legend Robin Emmett and his wife Judie at the Living Legends dinner



PHOTO: MENDY TUCKETT

THROUGH THE AGES Patterson River





PATTERSON RIVER



CHELSEA



CARRUM

COMPILED BY KEITH PAKENHAM



FACES OF CFA

KATE CARPENTER DANDENONG BRIGADE DISTRICT 8

How long have you been with this brigade?

I've been stationed at Dandenong Fire Brigade for around five months. Before that I was at Cranbourne and have also relieved at numerous brigades across District 8.

Why did you join CFA?

I joined CFA to pursue a career that challenged me, enabled me to help others and offered vast opportunities. The journey so far has been different from what I had imagined, because being a firefighter is so different to anything I had done previously in my work life. However, I feel that this job has exceeded my expectations and is something that just continues to get better and better with time and experience.

What was the first incident you attended?

The first incident I responded to was a motor bike accident. I remember being so nervous to attend my first incident and was definitely happy to get the first one out of the way.

Which incident has had the greatest impact on you?

I don't think there's one incident I can pinpoint. I think all incidents to some degree have an impact on you. Yes, some are more significant to you personally than others, some that surprise you, and some might shock you. I think that's part of what makes this job great and I probably take away something from most incidents that I attend.

What have you done around your home to prevent fires?

I live in a high-density suburban area, so the main things I have focused on in my house are working smoke alarms and appliances in good condition. We also tend not to have appliances operating when we aren't at home.

What do you do when you're not firefighting?

When I'm not at work I like to do things that continue to keep my fitness up and get me outdoors. I've just



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

started at a CrossFit gym which I am loving for the challenge. It brings some competitiveness back into my training, which has helped me remain motivated and is perfect for maintaining fitness for the job. I've also just started paddle boarding and surfing which I'm hopeless at, but that's half the fun.

After a long stint of firefighting, what meal do you crave?

I love food. It's impossible for me to pick one thing!

What do you like to listen to on the drive home from a job?

We don't really listen to music. More often than not we reflect on different aspects of the incident; what went well and where we could improve. As I'm in the early stages of my career, there's something I can learn in every job. ■



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Cover: A community-led planning session at Walkerville. Photo by Jenny O'Sullivan