

Brigade

summer 2016

Protecting lives
and property

cfa.vic.gov.au



▼ New crew cab light tanker





04

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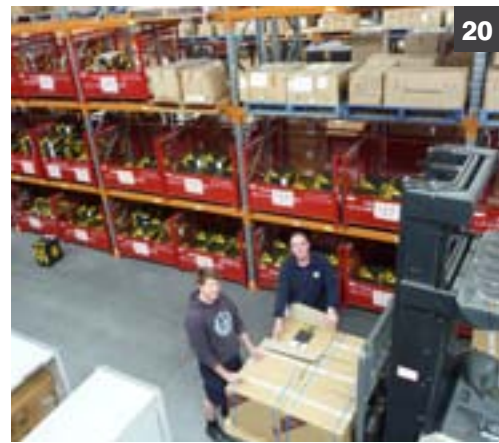
New crew cab light tanker

COVER PHOTO: BLAIR DELLEMIJN

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Chair Greg Smith



It has been pleasing to see the discontinuation of Supreme Court proceedings which have, regrettably, been the public's impression of the work being done by CFA. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The Board has been extremely busy attending to its governance structures, dealing with reports from the CEO in relation to executive structures, together with finalising our annual report. The general work of the Board and the good work of CFA volunteers has been in many respects business as usual.

In particular, I would like to highlight the effort of the Board in securing additional funding for volunteers (\$20 million plus access to another \$5 million) which is over and above existing grants. This was announced by the Minister for Emergency Services the Hon James Merlino on 6 October at Wattle Glen Fire Station.

The new amendments to the Workplace Relations Act have added a new dimension to the relationship between volunteers and career firefighters, which we will have to work through. These amendments present us all with new challenges. Our team will continue to work through these matters.

As we enter summer, the peak fire danger period, the CFA Board is pleased with the professionalism displayed by our members in preparing to keep the community safe.

These challenging matters have not detracted from our CFA members putting in supreme efforts to be ready and I would like to extend a warm thanks to all.

It is important to me and the Board that the CFA logo remains an iconic symbol representing 'protection of your community' rather than associated with division.

Our Chief Officer Steve Warrington briefed the CFA Board on the progress of preparedness among brigades, which remains on schedule while assisting during severe weather events locally and interstate.

There have been a number of items the CFA Board has acted on:

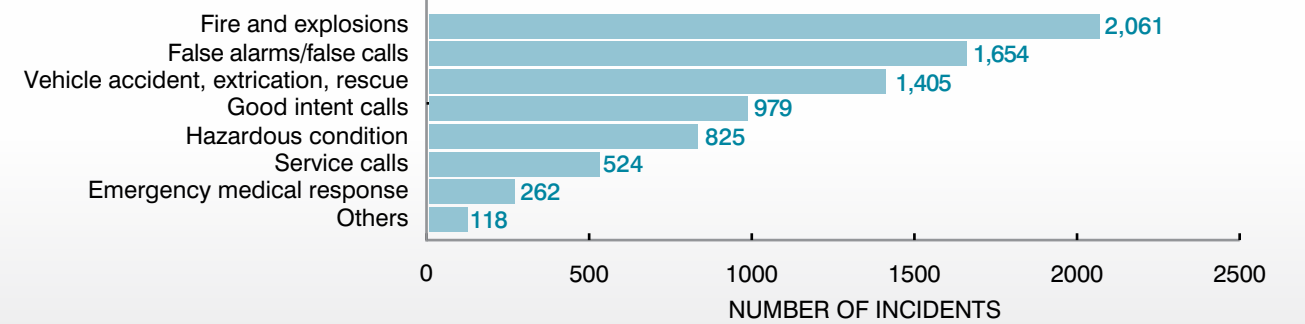
- We endorsed the new terms of reference and membership of the Board sub-committees. This information is available on the CFA website.
- We provided feedback and endorsed the proposed CFA Performance Measurement Framework, which is intended to be the basis of future internal and external reporting of CFA performance against a comprehensive range of measures.
- We expect to receive the initial findings of the VEOHRC before the year is out and we thank you for your positive engagement in this equity and diversity review. We anticipate the final report and recommendations to be tabled in mid-2017. See page 18 for more about this.
- We're undertaking interviews for the Chief Executive Officer role and expect a decision soon from the high quality field of candidates.

The Board wishes you all the best for summer and thanks you for your commitment.

Incident summary

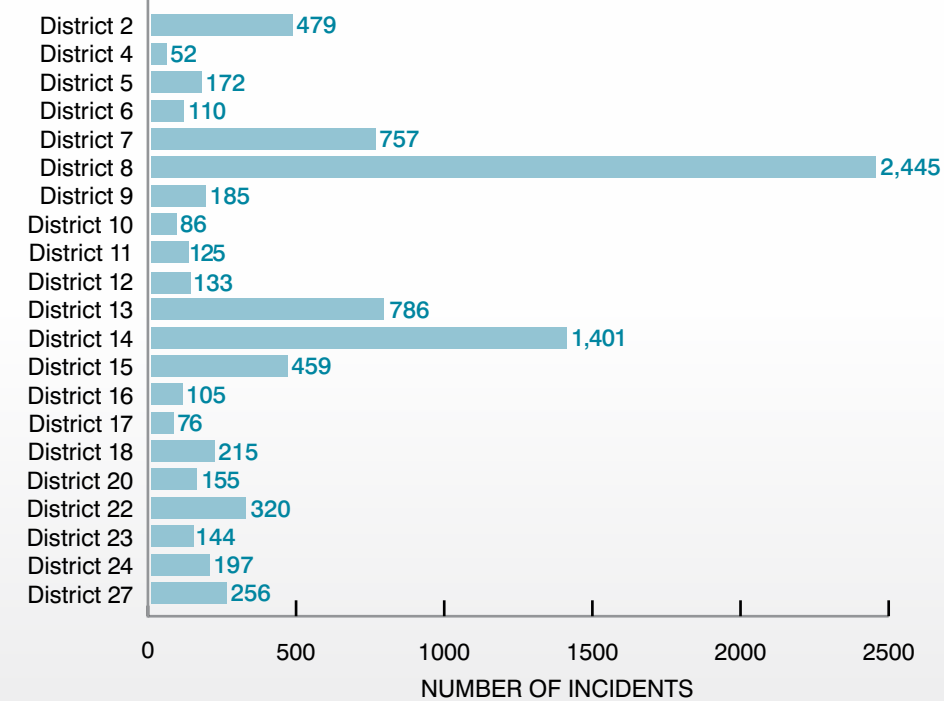
STATEWIDE INCIDENTS BY TYPE

1 July - 30 September 2016



STATEWIDE INCIDENTS BY DISTRICT

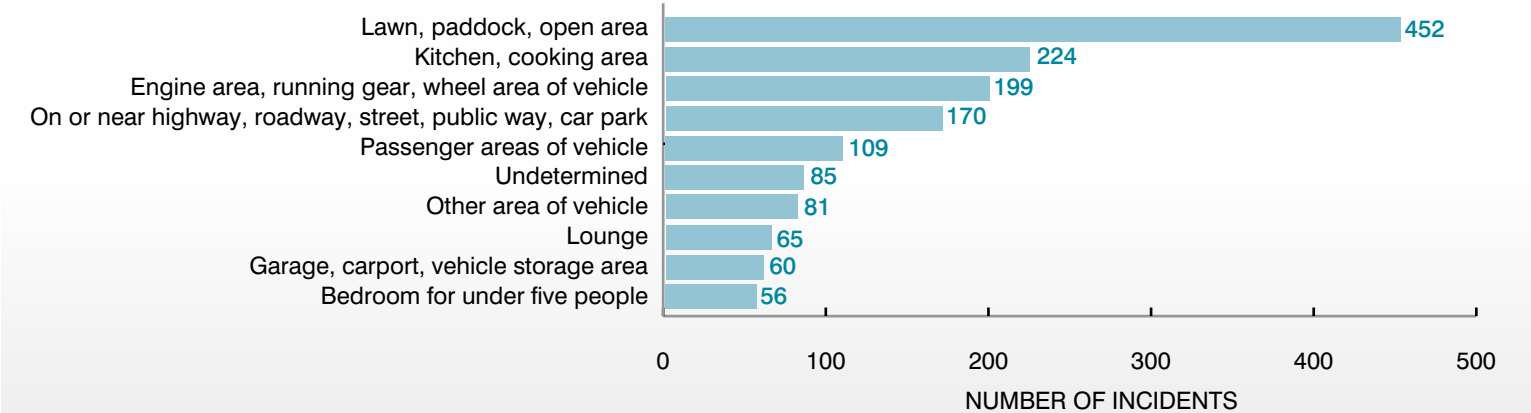
1 July - 30 September 2016



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 July - 30 September 2016



CFA members work hard in floods



PHOTO: DAVID RYLAND

Heavy rain during September and October led to widespread flooding affecting many communities across Victoria. The floods were the most significant since 2012.

Following these floods, a number of recommendations were made which led to changes in emergency management arrangements and increased capability in flood modelling and forecasting.

SES delivered a number of community connection programs to give advice about local flood risks and actions that the community could take to prepare for floods.

Stronger relationships have been built between SES, CFA, MFB and DELWP along with many other organisations over the past few years. New emergency management arrangements have led to increased cooperation and support across the sector, providing a much more effective joined-up capability. We have also increased capability to support relief and recovery efforts.

The demonstrated commitment of agencies to work together was again outstanding during these floods. It's really encouraging to see agencies working as one united team to ensure we can combine our collective skills and resources to resolve emergencies and support communities in an effective way.

In flood-affected areas, we saw multi-agency incident management teams working together to provide effective community information and support members on the ground. CFA brigade members were either working beside SES members or working alone in their communities within the incident management system, delivering vital community information or providing and laying sandbags.

The benefit of agency collaboration was perfectly illustrated in mid-September when Geelong's new Land Based Swift Water Rescue (LBSWR) team – comprising SES and CFA members and supported by the Ambulance Victoria helicopter – was dispatched to help rescue two people at Inverleigh after the pair became trapped in their vehicle in rising floodwater from the Leigh River. See the story on the next page.

I commend the ability of these highly-trained volunteers to respond to rescues in stormwater drains, canals, rivers or creeks.

Victoria is developing a strong reputation for agencies working together cohesively. We have worked hard at improving our relationships and understanding each agency's culture and capabilities. More importantly, communities throughout the state are getting much-needed support when they need it.

STORY TREVOR WHITE, CHIEF OFFICER OPERATIONS VIC SES

MFB drones help assess damage

Two MFB quadcopter drones, operating in the north-east, gave crucial information to incident control centres (ICCs) in Benalla and Shepparton.

A Wodonga quarry was close to being inundated with water and there was a risk to nearby powerlines if the soil washed away and the quarry wall collapsed. The quarry's perimeter was too dangerous to approach on foot, so a drone sent high-definition images to the Benalla ICC.

At Strathmerton on the Murray River, a second drone was used to check whether levees were holding. The same drone also recorded images of a holiday resort which was surrounded by water because Shepparton ICC needed confirmation the levee was intact. This drone also spent some time at Wangaratta taking images of properties inundated by water to assess restoration needs.



PHOTO: TIM WADSWORTH

Pair saved from Inverleigh floodwaters

INCIDENT: Rescue from floodwater
DISTRICT: 7
DATE: 14 September 2016
BRIGADES: Inverleigh, Teesdale, Bannockburn, Geelong Rescue, Winchelsea



Teamwork between CFA, Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria, SES and boat rescue crews saved a man and teenage girl from floodwaters in Inverleigh, west of Geelong.

The siblings became stranded after driving a ute into water that had risen to 1.3 metres.

Inverleigh Fire Brigade was first on scene at around 6pm. Inverleigh brigade Captain Noel Wilson and his crew assessed the strength of the water and were concerned the ute may start to move downstream. So, while waiting for backup, they implemented an interim plan of moving the much more stable, larger fire truck partly into the water so ropes could be thrown to the ute.

Geelong's Land Based Swift Water Rescue team, comprising members from CFA, SES, Victoria Police and Surf Lifesaving, fed two life jackets down the ropes for the pair.

"They were both pretty scared and we were close enough to be able to speak with them and keep them as calm as possible," Noel said. "We then waited for air support to winch them to safety."

Each agency had its contingency plan to prepare for a range of scenarios that could have happened during such a precarious rescue. A boat rescue crew moved downstream to be in a position to catch the man and girl if the ute was pushed by floodwaters.

"Everyone did everything they could to safely rescue these people, as quickly as possible," Noel said.

"It's always about thinking one step ahead and preparing for a range of things that can happen."

The rescue took around two hours.

STORY BRIE SNARE



PHOTO: NOEL WILSON



PHOTO: JUSTICE CAMERON PHOTOGRAPHY

Stay safe around solar panels



When Shepparton Fire Brigade Senior Station Officer Leigh Allan arrived at a daytime structure fire in Kialla, the presence of 10 solar panels on the home's tin roof immediately triggered alarm bells.

As incident controller at the fire, which destroyed the home in late September, his primary concern was that the metal roof itself could be 'live'.

While Leigh had found an isolator switch and shut it down (see photo, right) he was still uncertain.

"Even though there was an isolator switch at ground level, we weren't sure whether there could be an additional switch on the roof," he explained.

In this instance, with at least 75 per cent of the structure engulfed by flames when crews arrived, attacking or venting the fire through the roof would not have been an option for firefighters.

But had the fire been less severe, Leigh acknowledged that solar panels could have significantly restricted what they were able to do without putting lives in danger.

Even from the ground, firefighters initially had difficulties.

"In the initial stages it really limited how we put water up there and the type of stream," Leigh said.

"We weren't able to use a jet stream due to the risk that electricity could be conducted back down the stream."

Operations Officer Glenn Pröbstl believes there's a growing need for firefighters to be aware of the risk, especially in parts of Victoria such as the north-east where the majority of homes and many businesses have tin roofs.

"When you have a bank of solar panels, the discharge from the panels can be up to 1,000 volts DC and, if a firefighter comes into contact, is enough to cause death," he said.

"The isolators are often located on the roof, and in many cases we see the fire is within the isolators themselves, which can leave bare wires that could contact part of the metal roof, energising the roof.

"This means it's too dangerous for firefighters to go on to the roof, or even to lean a ladder up against the roof, because if power is discharging it has the potential to be live."

Glenn said that even if the isolator was at ground level and could be accessed (as was the case during the Kialla house fire) it wasn't a matter of simply shutting off power and going in.

"There's no guarantee the cabling won't be affected by the fire, and that could run anywhere through the house," he said.

"The risk for firefighters comes from either coming into contact with a live cable anywhere in the house or coming into contact with metal [such as the roof] that's in contact with the cable."

Glenn has important advice for firefighters approaching a house with solar panels.

"Proceed with caution, especially if there's a tin roof," he said.

"Even if the roof is not metal, you still need to be careful due to the risk from exposed cables from the solar panels to the inverter."

Glenn said the key to managing the risk from solar panels was to block sunlight from hitting the panels.

"Stop the sunlight and you stop the discharge of electricity," he said. "If you have access to an aerial appliance, use it to access and cover the solar panels. Your other option could be to throw a rope over the roof and drag heavy duty black plastic over from the other side to cover the panels and block out the sun.

"If either of those options aren't possible, your next option would be to seek expert electrical advice."

Meanwhile, Leigh said with solar panels becoming more available and more common, firefighters had to take them into account at structure fires.

"It's something we are looking for and training on more as a matter of course now."

STORY SONIA MACLEAN



PHOTOS: LEIGH ALLAN

Helping SES with storm damage

CFA teams specialising in urban search and rescue (category 2), rooftop safety with a chainsaw, and impact assessment, helped SES deal with storm-affected houses in the Dandenong Ranges during and following a storm on 9 October.

A joint CFA District 8 and 13 high-angle rescue (HART) crew was asked to work on some buildings to prevent further damage so that SES members could manage their fatigue levels. The three-person crew has been trained in SES and MFB rooftop safety systems and the members also have chainsaw and tree access/rescue skills.

"Appropriately-qualified personnel from CFA HART were able to help SES crews with working on roofs to remove trees and limit

damage done by the storm," said Rowville Station Officer Alec Draffin. "It highlights again that CFA is not just bushfires and is part of the all-hazards, all-agencies approach to emergencies in Victoria."

When CFA members are on a job, it's their workplace and it's important to keep them safe. The work conditions that a carpenter, plumber or electrician are entitled to should also be applied to CFA members, including when they need a system for preventing falls.

The days of working at heights with no prevention from falls, for non-time-critical events, has passed and we must all keep up with other workplace requirements. The work should be delayed until a properly-trained crew can make access.

Although there are some legislative exemptions for emergency workers working at heights, we must ask ourselves, 'is what we are about to do reasonable?'

The crew in the Dandenong Ranges worked until the early hours of the morning removing trees from roofs and repairing loose flashings and roof cladding to prevent further damage, loss or injury.

The scale of this type of event needs several agencies to work together to ensure appropriately-skilled people are supporting the community in their time of need.

STORY SENIOR STATION OFFICER DARYL OWEN

PHOTO: DARYL OWEN

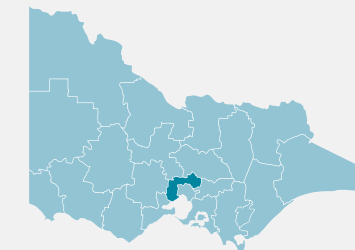
Man rescued from pit in Mernda

INCIDENT: Trench rescue

DISTRICT: 14

DATE: 23 September 2016

BRIGADES: Mernda, South Morang, Epping, Wollert



A critically-injured man stuck down a two-metre-deep concrete pit on a new housing development in Mernda was rescued by multi-agency teamwork.

CFA crews worked alongside MFB, Ambulance Victoria paramedics and police to hoist the man up on a spinal board. The rescue took around 50 minutes.

District 14 Acting Operations Officer Brian Scown said all crews worked exceptionally well together firstly to assess the situation and later to quickly adjust the original plan.

"We had called for specialised equipment to assist with the rescue. However, while it was on its way, paramedics determined that we needed to get the man out and on the way to a hospital quickly," Brian said.

"We had equipment that could be used so we put Plan B into action. We sent a spinal board down into the pit and used a sling to secure the man



PHOTO: BRIAN SCOWN

on to the board before using some old-fashioned muscle power to bring him to the surface.

"CFA firefighters had firstly assessed the concrete pit as being structurally sound, then performed some atmospheric monitoring to ensure there was nothing nasty down there and there was enough oxygen.

"Firefighters helped paramedics by performing an initial assessment of the man while in the pit, then paramedics also went down to stabilise him.

"It was a brilliant demonstration of strong teamwork across agencies and quick thinking to change plans based on the changing situation."

STORY BRIE SNARE

CEO COLUMN

Frances Diver



When you pass through a town in Victoria you can virtually guarantee a few things – a football ground, a pub, a community hall and a CFA brigade.

Over the past few months I have been welcomed at many of our stations, which has continued to highlight the iconic status of

who we are. Previously, when driving through towns, I'd seek out the local rural hospital, whereas now it's all about locating all the fire stations.

In my travels I have enjoyed meeting members at the District 24 Captains' Forum in Wodonga, the North West Region leadership team meeting at Huntly, VFBV District 9 council meeting at Leongatha, and at fire stations in Bendigo, Morwell and Aireys Inlet as well as engaging at forums in Boronia and Ararat.

Our members are again gearing up to deliver this summer season throughout regional and rural Victoria, and beyond.

Throughout spring, numerous brigades played crucial roles in addressing the statewide blackout of South Australia and helping those affected by floodwater throughout Victoria and southern New South Wales.

Our members worked tirelessly in partnership with other emergency services organisations to support members of the community affected by incidents out of their control. Each attendee used their knowledge, resources and skills to carry out a range of activities including laying sandbags against torrents from burst river banks, tackling and addressing damage caused by high winds and ensuring communities had crucial support during a tough experience.

From the outset of my time in this role, my highest priority has been to help CFA keep on delivering our much-needed services.

To support this aim, changes have been made to the CFA executive reporting arrangements. This will ensure we have a solid leadership foundation with a clear structure for roles and responsibilities to support the delivery of key priorities and enhance our focus on frontline service needs.

Details are available at news.cfa.vic.gov.au/news/changes-to-the-executive-structure.html.

I am delighted to say we've secured a vital \$20 million from the Victorian Government for CFA brigades, which includes funding for 28 trucks, work wear and personal protective clothing for volunteers. In addition, CFA volunteers can access a new grants scheme for emergency services volunteer organisations for brigade sustainability initiatives. Information can be found at emv.vic.gov.au/our-work/volunteers-in-emergency-management/emergency-services-volunteer-sustainability-grants-program. This will deliver over \$5 million funding in 2016-17.

As well as providing members with the right tools and equipment, this investment enables brigades to build, support and grow a diverse and resilient volunteer base.

I am looking forward to announcing the successful applicants as part of our Summer Fire Safety Local Initiatives Program. Last year we were able to fund 20 local initiatives and I anticipate the new and innovative initiatives this year will ultimately strengthen community resilience in the successful Victorian communities.

We are also tackling the important issue of diversity within CFA. The Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission's Equity and Diversity Review is underway and the team will soon move into assessing all the data from their extensive interviews conducted throughout the organisation to present their findings to the Board.

Likewise, I continue to work with our team on both the PTA and Operational Enterprise Agreements. I understand this operational EA has been highly controversial and disruptive but this will come to resolution, which we're committed to achieving as quickly as possible.

We remain focused on preparing for the summer season and we will absolutely be present and responsive to provide the service required and expected – a service that communities respect, appreciate and have faith in.

We're a large and comprehensive fire and emergency services organisation. Our work is much broader than just bushfires – the traditional community perception – and we attend incidents daily to ensure communities remain safe and are protected from accidents and the destructive side of nature.

The CFA logo remains, and will always be, a symbol of protecting the community.

on-year increase in donations. Our record number of donations was the second highest in Australia, behind NSW Police with 778 donations.

CFA's top donor centres were Bendigo (85), Ringwood (67), Geelong (59), Ballarat (53) and Airport West (35).

On behalf of Chief Officer Steve Warrington, a big thank you to all the donors and the regional coordinators.

STORY JOHN LLOYD

CFA wins blood challenge

This year's emergency services blood challenge went down to the last day in a very close race between CFA and Victoria Police.

The Red Cross Blood Service introduced Red25 to encourage organisations to donate blood, and the emergency services challenge is one of many competitions within sectors.

At the end of September at CFA's District 14 headquarters, CFA was presented with three winner's trophies for the highest number of donations in Victoria (744), the highest frequency of donation and the highest year-

CHIEF OFFICER



Steve Warrington

On 2 and 3 November, I met with our senior service delivery leaders. The focus across the two days was our operational preparedness for the summer season.

Each region presented their priorities, issues, challenges and best practice. Naturally, there were a number of consistent themes including ongoing flooding and our resourcing involvement; new grass growth and heightened focus on grassfire risk as the season progresses; fatigue management; and our capacity and capability to ensure CFA will be there this summer.

I also presented my other priorities for the next six months.

- Unification of the organisation. This extends beyond our frontline firefighters to all members with the objective to bring our people together to focus on our commitment to serve the community.
- Embedding our new Fire and Emergency Management headquarters structure based on the following portfolios: Urban, Bushfire, Training, Community Safety and Service Delivery Coordination and Safety.
- The importance of partnerships. We need to improve both our internal and external partnerships and the focus on interoperability.
- Changing our culture through both a backward and forward-looking lens. CFA has a long and proud tradition with our legislated responsibilities coming largely from the *CFA Act 1958*. CFA must adopt a more innovative, contemporary, unified focus and be an organisation that acts to address barriers to diversity and inclusion. I recognise that for CFA this will be a journey and I seek your support in making this a reality. The Equity and Diversity Review, which is being led by the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, is an important part of this work.
- Operational priorities including workforce planning; role of the group; fitness for duty; member development; emergency medical response; and progressing the implementation of the Victorian Government's commitment to recruiting 350 new career firefighters.

I also heard about a number of recent innovations to improve our systems and processes and support us all in making evidence-based decisions. These include trialling a fuel-based Fire Danger Index; a Learning Management System for all things training; and an Incident Management Team Availability Tool.

CFA received an additional \$20 million funding CFA from the government for vehicles, personal protective equipment and work wear uniforms for brigade members in leadership roles. The announcement of this funding also included information about the new Emergency Services Volunteer Sustainability Grants Program, with \$15 million in grants available to volunteers in 2016-17. The program will complement existing grants programs. To find out more about the program and how to apply, go to emv.vic.gov.au

ACTING ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER South West Region



Rohan Luke

In the lead up to the 2016-17 fire season, as well as focusing on preparedness, we have given significant support to SES in response to floods across the region, allowing us to continue to enhance our relationships at an emergency management and incident level.

In South West Region, there was flooding in Casterton, Coleraine, Warrnambool, Port Fairy and Hamilton in Districts 4 and 5. District 6 experienced landslides along the Great Ocean Road, with flooding affecting a number of properties and forcing multiple road closures. For the communities along the Great Ocean Road, this meant the second threat within nine months following the Wye River-Jamiesons Track fire of Christmas 2015.

The commitment shown by staff and volunteers supporting SES in control centres and in the field, while also implementing our own preparedness arrangements, was a reflection of their great determination and hard work. However, it was a timely reminder of the importance of fatigue management and that our focus must always be on the safety of our people.

Leading into the fire season, work on a review of burnovers and entrapments at state level has identified that we must focus our attention on information on the fireground and command structures in order to prevent our crews being placed in high-risk situations. The adoption of rural-urban interface awareness, increased discussion around situational awareness and the changes to LACES are important steps to ensure our crews are aware of the tactics needed to protect properties, particularly where it's too dangerous to be on the fire front and where fire behaviour and weather are most erratic.

Work has continued to evolve to increase the communities' resilience through shared responsibility around planning and fuel mitigation. This focus is vital as we need to understand what the community will do in an emergency so we can protect them.

South West Region continues to come together through some significant changes, including my role as Acting Assistant Chief Officer and Peter Baker as Operations Manager Regional Commander for a six-month period. Gregg Paterson steps up into the new Deputy Chief Officer – Training position in Fire and Emergency Management. We are incredibly proud of Gregg and wish him all the best in his new role.

Of course, the current industrial environment will challenge some of our members and this is understandable. But, while each of us will have our own opinions, as leaders we need to focus on supporting our members and delivering the best service possible to the community. To be successful, our behaviours must reflect our values – integrity, adaptability, safety, together and respect.

Twitter: [@CFASouthWestACO](https://twitter.com/CFASouthWestACO)

ACTING ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER North East Region



Ross Sullivan

Looking back over the past three months, North East Region has been busy with floods and severe weather.

Our brigades, volunteers and staff have been involved with flood support and during and after extreme wind events, responding to and supporting local communities, local command facilities, incident control centres and regional control centres. Our contribution and commitment has been significant so, to you all, a sincere thanks for your continued effort, commitment and support.

CFA also provided crews to South Australia recently for flood support. Around 150 CFA personnel along with 30 vehicles were deployed over a number of days, and crews were dispatched from our region to support the effort.

At the time of writing this column, rainfall continues to delay the onset of the coming fire season with most areas wet sodden. Many members I've talked to recently have told me their biggest issue will be avoiding bogging their trucks, so take care out there and remain aware of the conditions you're operating in.

The spring edition of *Brigade* magazine contained the *Pre-Season Update 2016-17 Summer Season* supplement. The focus was firmly on front line safety. Some of the topics covered were turnover/entrapment, LACES, rural/urban interface, hazardous trees, heat stress active cooling techniques and communications. I strongly encourage you to read or reread the supplement and, where you can, access the online reference material mentioned in the *Pre-Season Update*.

It's also a great idea to then discuss these topics with members of your brigade. This material and the pre-season briefings being held in each of your districts, are critical for your safety and will help update you on important operational matters for the coming fire season.

Over recent weeks, a significant number of group exercises have been conducted, Not only does this take time and commitment from brigades and members on the day, but it always involves a significant amount of time to plan and coordinate these activities – all critical to our preparedness. Thanks to all of you who give your time and effort to this.

To quote a former Chief Officer, "Together we make a difference. Train together, exercise together, respond together, recover together, respect each other and work as one."

Christmas and the new year are only weeks away. It's a time for family and friends and, hopefully for most, a time to relax and recharge the batteries for the year to come. This year, the weather and conditions may be kind enough to allow us a little respite before we head into the drying conditions of summer.

To you and yours I wish you a very Merry Christmas and a happy and safe new year.

Stay safe and look out for each other.

ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER South East Region



Trevor Owen

In society today, we are increasingly hearing about the importance of equity and diversity. CFA, as a community-based emergency services organisation, must take the lead in demonstrating its commitment to equality as a means of eliminating discrimination.

I recently took part in an interfaith tour (see page 25) and spent time with local faith leaders and representatives. The tour gave me a greater insight into different cultures and religions, and it dispelled many of the myths associated with multicultural faiths. So what does equity and diversity mean to a brigade? At CFA, we want our membership profile to reflect the diverse nature of the community we serve. This means CFA must play a lead role in promoting respect, tolerance and understanding.

A cultural change like this will always take time and can be challenging, but by encouraging greater gender equity and actively promoting a positive culture, our organisation will be healthier and more representative of the community we serve.

I am pleased with the level of preparedness activities being undertaken by brigades, groups and districts. Training and exercising together as one is an important aspect of our preparedness activities.

Despite the recent focus, the one area of preparedness that often gets neglected is our emotional and psychological preparedness. We know how to execute physical and skill-based readiness activities, but how do we ensure we are mentally ready to take on the season ahead?

As part of member safety, we must ensure the mental and emotional wellbeing of our members is paramount. Our safety-first culture is critical to our success and must be considered on the same level of importance as the functional activities associated with summer preparedness. We mustn't underestimate the importance of looking after the emotional and mental health of our members.

We continue to operate in an environment of ongoing change, and I commend our members for their ability to remain focused on their daily readiness as well as the lead-up to the summer period. Your ongoing dedication, commitment and sacrifice over this period is both recognised and appreciated.

Finally, on behalf of the Regional Leadership Team, I want to wish all our members a safe and enjoyable festive season. As I reflect on 2016 and the many achievements, I am proud of what we have achieved in South East Region and look forward to meeting the challenges that 2017 provides us head on. Keep up the good work!

To you and your family, stay safe this summer season.

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Facebook: [facebook.com/CFASouthEastACO](#)

ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER North West Region



Gavin Thompson

The commitment of members in North West Region (NWR) never ceases to amaze me. From on-the-ground support to flood-affected communities to pre-season planning, they constantly demonstrate resilience and determination.

Our regional leaders also demonstrate vision. In October, they unanimously endorsed our Gender Equity and Violence Prevention Action Plan.

Advocating for strategy and action in this space is not new to NWR. We've been on this journey since White Ribbon Day in 2014 and we now have a tactical framework to help us achieve greater impact within the region and CFA more broadly over the next four years.

The plan's core focus is to resource and strengthen the capability of our members to actively promote gender equity and the prevention of violence. Strategies include developing workforce training opportunities, the sharing of best practice and building partnerships that will contribute to positive cultural change.

We've gained great respect over generations because CFA is 'from the community, for the community and by the community'. By striving for greater gender equity and violence prevention, our proud traditions will be strengthened and our leadership enhanced to make us a more contemporary organisation, truly representative of the communities we serve.

I'd like to acknowledge the great innovation and foresight shown by our former ACO Mike Wassing for championing such an important piece of work, and also thank key members of my team for their outstanding leadership.

CFA Chief Officer Steve Warrington recently launched our White Ribbon Day campaign; so why not join us on the journey to greater gender equity this year.

As mentioned above, the great deal of support that NWR members gave flood-affected communities was a tremendous sign of the strength that resides in CFA and how we respond when people are in their time of need. We now need to focus on the summer.

Despite the numerous paddocks of water that have been around for a few weeks, it would be easy to drop the ball and not focus on the pending Fire Danger Period. As I move around the region meeting our people, it has been pleasing to see that preparations are well underway – from the incident management team briefings that have been conducted, to the crew leader training at district and group level. I also attended a brigade training night and saw the dedicated members practising their turnover drill.

So when the warm weather hits, we will be well prepared and ready. Whether it be our staff or volunteers, fire brigades or district headquarters, we are ready. We are all in this together: CFA people providing CFA services to our communities.

Twitter: [@CFANorthWestACO](#)

ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER West Region



Peter O'Keefe

Over the past few months, there have been some challenging times for many CFA members. I would like to acknowledge and thank you all for your commitment in maintaining your focus and putting the community at the centre of what you do, irrespective of the situations faced.

The display of our CFA values in action is critical to the success of our mission of protecting lives and property. Sometimes circumstances are confronting but, by using our values as the guiding principles, these challenges can be overcome. Respecting an individual's right to have a point of view is one of the great aspects of our country. If we all undertake to do this with respect we will continue to achieve great results.

For those members who need support and assistance, the confidential Member Assistance Program is available to all CFA members and their families. Phone 1300 795 711.

As we move into summer, we will see an increase in the number and frequency of community education sessions and meetings. These are a great opportunity to understand the community's expectations and what their plan is for this summer season.

If you need further information about what's planned in your community, please contact your local district headquarters. Don't forget to check that you and your family have updated your own personal plan so you will all stay safe this season.

Recently, there has been the annual focus on pre-season briefings, exercises, workshops, and conferences in preparation for summer 2016-17. Thanks to all who attended these events.

This year has again seen CFA provide considerable support to communities impacted by flood. My personal thanks for your continued commitment. I know that those people who needed CFA's help greatly appreciated your time and expertise.

Even though we have had considerable rain, the summer is upon us and it is sure to be a busy one. With some parts of West Region still wet, vehicle access will be a challenge.

This season the pre-determined dispatch of aircraft has been improved and additional aircraft will be available. Please speak with your local district team to ensure you know what arrangements are in place with aviation this season.

To all the team in West Region, have a Merry Christmas and very happy 2017. Spend time with your family and enjoy the festive season. Keep up the great work and be safe in all you do.

Twitter: [@CFAWestACO](#)

Cold climate jackets

Each volunteer brigade is set to be issued with six cold climate jackets as part of a new project being run by CFA's State Personal Protective Equipment and Clothing Management Centre.

The unisex jackets, which are expected to be delivered to brigades from December, are available in a range of sizes and are intended to be shared by members.

Project Manager Matt Adams said the jackets were designed to protect members from cold and wet conditions in situations where certified personal protective clothing was not required.

"These jackets are not to be used for firefighting activities, though the fabric does have limited flame-retardant qualities for added protection at incidents," Matt said.

The CFA cold climate jacket features:

- flame-retardant laminated outer fabric with high visibility characteristics
- fleece inner lining
- Foldaway hood, radio microphone loops, epaulette holder, large front pockets, pen holder
- CFA panel on the back.



PHOTO: COURTESY STATE PPE&C CENTRE

Delivery of the jackets will be in stages, with priority given to brigades without structural PPC.

"The timing might not be ideal, having cold climate clothing rolled out in summer, but it has been important to find the right supplier and make sure the product was tested with volunteer members," Matt added.

"Once we identified an outer material and inner liner we were comfortable with, we made up a garment and sent it out for consultation and field trials at various locations," said Sreten Landolac, Manager Asset Performance and Evaluation.

An open tender process was held to select a supplier for the jacket, with the project being implemented in consultation with VFBV.

STORY SONIA MACLEAN

Crew cab light tankers in time for summer



PHOTOS: BLAIR BELLEMIN

Breathing apparatus on trial

CFA, together with MFB, is leading a multi-agency project to select the next generation of BA for use by the state's firefighters. The equipment will also be used by Victoria Police, Corrections Victoria and Ambulance Victoria.

Following an open tender held earlier this year, potential suppliers were asked to submit BA sets for consideration to replace the existing ageing equipment.

The Respiratory Protection Replacement Project (RPRP) trialled these BA sets at three VEMTC training grounds: Wangaratta, Longerenong and Craigieburn. CFA volunteers and CFA and MFB career firefighters used scenario-based trials designed to test all aspects of the equipment.

Station Officer Luke Waterson (and RPRP team member) said the RPRP was working to bring the equipment used by Victorian firefighters into the 21st century.

"CFA is contributing to the choice of equipment we'll use for years to come; equipment that will be compatible across the emergency services sector," Luke said.

"As well as testing the equipment, the field trials were a really good opportunity for skills maintenance. We covered BA skillsets in structure fire, search and rescue, hazmat and after-use care and maintenance."

Evaluations by CFA and MFB members are an essential part of the overall project.

STORY PAUL HUGGETT



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

Telstra partnership

CFA and Telstra have a long history of supporting at-risk communities and have worked together on recovery efforts.

This summer, we've joined forces again to encourage Victorians to prepare for the fire season.

Over the coming months, we will work with Telstra to help Victorians prepare themselves and their families, as well as demonstrate how technology can help keep communities informed and connected during an incident.

CFA's first crew cab light tankers were rolled out ahead of this fire season.

While the eight new crew cab models, which feature an all-alloy body construction and rotomoulded 1,700-litre water tank, are similar to the previous 1.2.4D light tanker, various design adjustments have been made to accommodate the larger cab.

The light tankers were built by Bell Environmental, the same company that is building 40 new heavy tankers for CFA. Four of the new light tankers were built under CFA's capital works program and the other four were delivered under the Volunteer Emergency Services Equipment Program (VESEP).

A key focus was to perfect the design for an electro-hydraulic cab-tilt mechanism that gives easy access to district mechanical officers. Also, a seat-belt arrangement incorporating lap/sash belts for all seats and extra reinforcement were rigorously tested to make sure they met safety standards.

Project Manager Elliott Barnfather said Bell Environmental took the initiative last year to fund and build a prototype for a new crew cab model after overseeing the production of 30 single cab light tankers.

"It was an entrepreneurial move, I think, because they recognised this was the way things were heading. Obviously, there's a clear advantage to having crew inside an air-conditioned cabin. It allows them to be transported in relative safety."

Elliott added that testing the prototype with Allambee Fire Brigade in Gippsland generated good feedback.

"The main issue we discovered was the long and low overhang on the bottom rear of the truck. This came about because with the larger cab the tray body had to be moved rearwards," he said.

"In the end we found a way to modify that design because it would have limited the truck's ability to manoeuvre in certain terrains, such as backing in or out of ditches."

The NPS75-155 four-wheel drive is one of Isuzu's best-selling trucks in Australia and is common in the mining sector as well as the fire services.

Elliott said an upgrade to Isuzu's NPS meant it could easily handle the additional passenger weight and an increased water tank capacity from 1,300 litres on the older 1.2.4D to 1,700 litres.

After good feedback from brigades, a decision was made to remain with the same water-cooled diesel engine.



Manoeuvrability and accessibility for crew members are key features of a light tanker, a vehicle Elliott described as practical as it can go places where the bigger tankers can't.

"As an engineer, I try to keep the design as simple as possible," he said.

A further 10 crew cab light tankers have also been approved as part of the 2016 VESEP program.

STORY SONIA MACLEAN

Fire Awareness Award winners

Each year CFA staff and volunteers develop important local initiatives to support their communities, and some of them are recognised through the Fire Awareness Awards.

This year there was an excellent range of entries from community groups, industry and Victorian fire agencies. Judges praised the high standard of applications, which demonstrated Victorians understand the importance of fire awareness and safety.

The Ready2Go Program, led by Echo Youth & Family Services and Cardinia Shire Council (pictured below) won the Access and Inclusion Award and the coveted RACV Insurance Award for Excellence.

The Ready2Go Program focuses on increasing the resilience of vulnerable community members who are disproportionately affected by extreme heat and other emergencies.

The program matches vulnerable members of the Cockatoo community to local volunteers who provide information, support and early relocation. Connecting local volunteers with participants was vital to building trust and empathy.

The Ready2Go program also launched a community training manual to help other townships implement the model using their own local support systems.

CFA won the Fire Services Award for a Project of Statewide Significance with The Fire Safety Pledge. This is an online pledge program which aims to increase community awareness of fire risk. Community members are asked to commit to some simple actions to increase their preparedness. The project also recognises and rewards brigades that connect with their community about fire preparedness.

The awards have been presented for more than 30 years as a collaborative venture between Victoria's fire agencies, and are supported by Emergency Management Victoria, RACV Insurance and ABC Local Radio.

The finalists were invited to a ceremony at the RACV Club on 1 December where the winners were announced. For more information about the awards visit fireawarenessawards.com.au.

STORY GEORGINA HILL



ACCESS AND INCLUSION

Echo Youth & Family Services and Cardinia Shire Council

Ready2Go Program

EDUCATION

Maryborough Education Centre

Emergency Services Journey

COMMUNITY-LED PREPAREDNESS (COMMUNITY)

Kerrie Hall Inc

Fire N Friends

COMMUNITY-LED PREPAREDNESS (INDUSTRY)

Surf Coast Shire Council

The Fire Game

COMMUNITY-LED PREVENTION

Bethanga Recreation Reserve Committee of Management

Friends of Bethanga Creek

RECOVERY (INDUSTRY)

Benalla Rural City Council and Department of Health and Human Services

Rural Fire Tales

FIRE SERVICES AWARD FOR PARTNERSHIP

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

Living with Bushfire – a Community Conference

RECOVERY (COMMUNITY)

Scotsburn Community Recovery Committee

Strengthening Communities After the Scotsburn Fires

INNOVATION AND DESIGN

IND Technology

Early Vegetation Fire Detection System for Overhead Powerlines

FIRE SERVICES AWARD FOR A PROJECT OF STATE SIGNIFICANCE

CFA

The Fire Safety Pledge

FIRE SERVICES AWARD FOR LOCAL-LED PREVENTION AND PREPAREDNESS

Mallacoota Community Safety and Resilience Support Group Projects

#Weworkasone

Engine bay door collisions



Over the past few years, there has been a sharp increase in the number of CFA firefighting vehicles colliding with fire station engine bay doors.

Vehicles hitting station doors, especially during turnouts, is one of the most common causes of damage to vehicles and fire stations.

As well as the repair costs, station door accidents can delay a brigade's turnout to an incident, so CFA has been considering ways to reduce the number of accidents.

The investigation has focused on automated door opening sequencing, door mechanical operations, new station member induction and driver training.

A number of contributing factors were identified which will be investigated further. CFA plans to:

- review the current automated door opening and lock-up PLC program standard
- review current engine bay door operating mechanical installations
- review the current engine bay fitout standard (including line markings, light signalling, remote control operation, signage and door control panels)
- consult with selected groups about these standards
- develop new in-house PLC software and test it at two stations, then roll out the installation of the software and motor room upgrades

- develop a station lock-up induction template for new station members and a new station induction information pack for member.
- CFA's long-term aim is to standardise the motor room door and lock-up operating systems, engine bay fit-out and induction processes in all integrated stations.

Induction templates for new station member have been issued, and consultation has begun to review and agree the automated door opening and lock-up PLC program standard and related engine bay fit-out.

What drivers can do

Drivers and/or crew members need to ensure that station doors are fully up and that any locking mechanisms are working. If warning systems are installed, drivers must comply with them before exiting the station.

Due to vehicle and station designs, it's recommended that passengers in the vehicle double check the position of doors before moving forward.

If the door is electrically operated, brigades should check their door systems to find out what happens during a power failure.

If working at a different station, be aware of the station door procedures and develop an induction process.

STORY KATERINA SIRIANOS

Incident facts

The information, below, is taken from the CFA's *Reducing the Incidence and Impact of Motor Vehicle Claims Project Stage 1 Final Report*.

- Engine bay door insurance claims account for 10 per cent of emergency vehicle claims
- There have been 77 engine bay door claims between 2006 and 2015
- Engine bay door claims incur both vehicle and building insurance costs
- Four per cent of claims are for engine bay door damage that occurs during a Code 1 call
- A quarter of all engine bay door accidents occur on Sundays.



Common causes

- Drivers rushing to improve response times
- Doors blowing down in the wind
- Faulty door mechanisms
- Drivers ignoring warning systems and proceeding against lights and/or alarms
- Lack of back-up systems in the event of power failure
- No warning systems fitted to electric doors
- Drivers failing to lower light masts
- Lack of induction programs for new and relieving members at stations.

If your brigade would like a template to fill in to advise new members how your station door's automatic and lock-up functions work, go to CFA Online/Brigades Online and search for 'Automatic door operating procedure'.

Equity and Diversity Review

Over the past few months, the members of the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) have travelled across Victoria to meet with a broad range of CFA members as part of the independent Equity and Diversity Review.

This review is being carried out in response to recommendations from the Victorian Fire Services Review 2015.

Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commissioner Kristen Hilton said the Equity and Diversity Review team has received a lot of feedback from CFA members through meetings, interviews and completed surveys.

"Thank you to everyone who took part in the review process over the past four months," she said.

"Driving equity and diversity, and making sure our workplaces are safe and respectful for everyone is crucial to creating an inclusive workplace."

The survey (both online and paper-based) and face-to-face interviews finished on 18 November 2016. Any members who missed the opportunity to participate can still call VEOHRC on 9032 3464 or email the Equity and Diversity Review team at independentreview@veohrc.vic.gov.au

The review team will analyse the data over coming months. During this time they will continue to prioritise the safety and anonymity of all CFA members who have contributed.

The final report will be made public in mid-2017.

STORY JESS ESLER

New app

Emergency Management Victoria has launched the new VicEmergency app to replace the FireReady app. It gives Victorian communities information about warnings and incidents for all emergencies, not just fires. Existing FireReady users need to update their app and recreate their watch zones. New users can download the app from the App Store or Google Play.

Technical support for members



PHOTO: PAUL MOLONNEY

The job of keeping CFA's communications infrastructure running smoothly is down to the Communications Operations department and its teams of communications technical services officers (CTSOs).

The Comms Helpdesk (9757 4800) is constantly taking calls and answering emails from CFA members who need technical help. These messages are passed on to the CTSOs who have specialist communications knowledge. Some CTSOs are based in the regions and others work out of the Bayswater office – and all are always on the road helping brigade members.

CTSOs visit many different locations including fire stations, statewide and interstate incident deployments, members' homes, hilltop radio repeaters, incident control centres and CFA headquarters.

Recently, Avon Group Officer and Stratford Fire Brigade Captain Mike Sears (pictured left in the photo) rang the helpdesk because he had an intermittent fault with the CFA radio in his ute.

As I was working in the Bairnsdale area at the time, I visited a farm in Stratford to repair the radio. I first tested it with VicFire and found there was no audio. VicFire knew who was trying to call them because the Avon Group radio

alias was displayed on the dispatch computer screen at Mt Helen.

The problem was a faulty handheld control head (HHCH). A CTSO's van is stocked with a wide range of spare parts, and I fitted the radio with a new HHCH. The radio was reprogrammed using a laptop computer and then I did another radio check with VicFire to make sure it worked properly.

After finishing the job, Mike's dogs Charli and Dusty were given a lesson in using the portable radio on the back of the ute. Who says you can't teach an old dog new tricks?

STORY CTSO PETER ARNETT

Coast Guard to the rescue

Sitting within the CFA command structure as a vehicle, Hastings Coast Guard takes control of an incident if there's no land access, travelling under lights and sirens at up to 40 knots an hour, with a response time of 10 minutes.

They are a marine brigade specialising in on-water firefighting. Their response area is all Westernport Bay up to 15 nautical miles offshore – that's 1,200 square kilometres including French Island.

They attend all CFA's Westernport Group meetings and also do training exercises with the group.

Their main vessel is a 9.5-metre plate aluminium custom-built vessel with a 300mm draught. The furthest they've taken it offshore was five nautical miles.

Jeremy West is the commander, the equivalent of a CFA captain, and is one of 10 CFA-accredited marine fire responders in the flotilla out of the 56 operational members. Patrols are carried out every Saturday and Sunday year-round and public holidays.

"Twenty per cent of our members aren't local – they just like to get out regularly for free on the water," said Jeremy.

"Every member has to do a Saturday or Sunday duty once a month which is an all-day skills maintenance session. We will run a scenario such as a broken-down boat. The crew has to locate the vessel using traditional chart navigation then plot a course using marine and electronic GPS chart plotters."

When approaching a disabled vessel, the crew has to ensure it's seaworthy and hasn't run aground with mud the main risk in Westernport.

"Two to three vessels run aground per month over summer," continued Jeremy, "and it's stupidity, plain and simple. It's the thrill of the chase to catch fish and then the tide goes out, or it's drunkenness and they crash into channel markers."

"Some people don't respect the ocean and what it can do.

"The most common incidents are flat batteries and we will jump start them. If they are out of fuel we will tow them.

"We also respond to one or two on-water fatalities a year either off boats or divers. Unfortunately, the body loses heat quickly in the water so thermal imaging tools have a short-use window. Even if the person was wearing a lifejacket that will eventually deflate and the majority of the time we are unable to locate a body. When something goes wrong, raising the alarm quickly is the key to survival on the water.

"In the CFA sense, the biggest risk is marina fires. Any vessel fire will burn to the waterline and the firefight is all about protection of nearby assets. We have marine saltwater engines so we fight fires with seawater using a slip-on pump and two-metre lengths of Duraline."

Last year the flotilla responded to 124 incidents, five of them CFA incidents: a boat fire, a helicopter crash, a marina fire and Hastings and Crib Point bushfires.

At the latter they were tasked with rescuing a woman trapped on the beach. They also fed video and photos back to the incident control centre from the waterside, functioning as ground observers.

Coast Guard is a registered training organisation and can run marine radio operator and boat operator courses and issue licences. Crew members work towards Certificate 2 in Competent Crew or Deckhand qualifications over six months. Coxswain Grades 1 and 2 allow members to drive the vessel and eventually become master of the vessel.

Marine brigades resulted from a Memorandum of Understanding drawn up between the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard and CFA in 2005.

STORY LEITH HILLARD



Left: Hastings Coast Guard from left, Phil Adams, Audrie Kearns, Nick Hunn, Chris Cotton and Michelle Bedford

PHOTO: LEITH HILLARD

How are people dying in floods?

New research from the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre analysed the circumstances surrounding fatalities caused by flooding in Australia from 1900 to 2015. The investigation explored the socio-demographic and environmental factors surrounding the deaths.

Overall, there were 1,859 fatalities over the 115 years, with distinct trends in relation to gender, age and activity. Victoria ranks third for numbers of deaths, with 245 people losing their lives from floods, with fatalities in Queensland and New South Wales accounting for 74 per cent of all deaths. Unsurprisingly, most deaths in Victoria were in winter and spring.

The highest proportion of fatalities occurred while victims were attempting to cross a bridge, causeway, culvert or road. The most common intended destination of those who died was their home. Flood

fatalities involving four-wheel drive vehicles are increasing – 75 per cent of deaths in floods involving four-wheel drives have happened since 2000. In the past 15 years, 16 people have died in floods in Victoria.

Other activities that led to a high proportion of fatalities included being engaged in an activity not near a usual watercourse such as driving through a town or near home and being surprised by flash flooding, engaging in activity in the water such as attempting a rescue or swimming, and engaging in an activity near water. Many victims were children playing in or near stormwater drains.

To read more about this research, go to bnhcrc.com.au/hazardnotes/20.

STORY NATHAN MADDOCK

Traditional burning workshop

As part of a two-year joint fire project, a traditional burning workshop was held earlier this year, at the Wathaurong Aboriginal Cooperative, Wurdi Youang, near Little River.

The aim of the project is to help Wadawurrung people and the broader Aboriginal community in the region to participate in traditional fire practices for the health of Country and People.

This project will also work towards a broader understanding of the cultural and social benefits derived from traditional fire practice.

It will create strong evidence for the continued application of traditional burning by Aboriginal Victorians, as well as benefits for CFA in vegetation management and two-way knowledge exchange.

The project, Wiyin-murrup yangarramela, meaning 'fire spirit comes back' in Wadawurrung language, is led by the

Corangamite Catchment Management Authority (CMA), in partnership with CFA, the Traditional Owners Wadawurrung, Aboriginal community members of the region, DELWP and Parks Victoria.

Aboriginal Elder and traditional fire knowledge holder Uncle Rod Mason facilitated the workshop, sharing his knowledge and guiding Traditional Owners and Aboriginal community members of the Corangamite CMA region to relearn and practise traditional Aboriginal burning.

Little River Fire Brigade has been working with the cooperative for many years and worked with Uncle Rod on the burn.

This project is a shining example of how working together, and learning from and listening to the different experiences, can benefit all stakeholders. It is a fantastic opportunity for CFA to learn more about our role in traditional burning on private property.

To learn more about traditional Aboriginal burning and CFA's involvement, email Owen Gooding: o.gooding@cfa.vic.gov.au.

STORY STEFANIE RUSSELL

PHOTO: OWEN GOODING

Share your stories

A few months ago, a story on CFA's News & Media (N&M) website about Narre Warren Fire Brigade members doing a home makeover for a sick member got 83,000 hits.

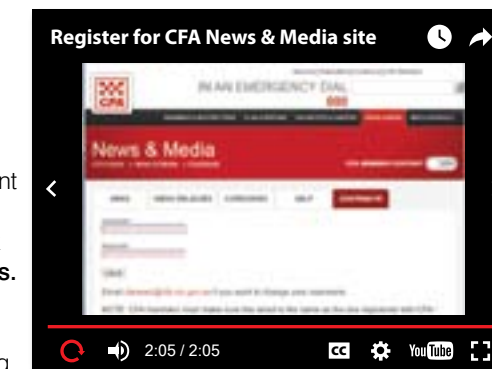
Around the same time, a CFA volunteer saved someone's life when he performed CPR in a shopping centre and the story on N&M got 21,000 hits. And a story about Falls Creek Fire Brigade's 21st birthday got 20,000 hits.

By putting your brigade stories on N&M, you can reach a huge audience, and the story may later appear on CFA's Facebook page ([facebook.com/cfamembers](https://www.facebook.com/cfamembers)) or in this magazine and reach even more people. So upload stories and celebrate your brigade's successes – whether they are fundraising activities, community engagement events, incidents, training, recruitment initiatives or service medal presentations.

You can find out everything you need to know about N&M by going to news.cfa.vic.gov.au and clicking on 'help'. Here, you can watch videos about a tour of the site, how to register and how to post a story and photos.

Any volunteer with a Brigades Online account can also sign up to use CFA's Yammer network by using their **members.cfa.vic.gov.au** email address. Yammer is an online social networking service where you can chat with other CFA members by joining existing groups or by setting up a private user group. Go to yammer.com/cfa.vic.gov.au and log in using your CFA member email address (which will have the format john.smith@members.cfa.vic.gov.au) and your Brigades Online password.

If you need to find your **members.cfa.vic.gov.au** email address, search for 'office 365' on Brigades Online and open the PDF called Office 365: Accessing Volunteer Webmail.



CFA thanks IGA for its support

With the help of their local communities, IGA stores around Victoria have continued to support CFA this year, with 112 brigades directly benefitting from some of the funds raised through the IGA Community Chest program.

In July, CFA received the monies raised in 2014-15 – a grand total of just over \$108,000, with \$63,500 being distributed to brigades and \$44,500 to the CFA public fund which gives donations for volunteer leadership and development training.

This year's CFA-SES Community Safety and Hazard Awareness State Forum was also supported by 2013-14 Community Chest funds, with the \$118,000 donation covering the entire weekend event's costs.

Bright brigade Captain Paul Mansfield said the community support through IGA was appreciated by the brigade. Bright received just under \$1,200, which helped to buy a field command vehicle secured through a VESEP grant.

Under the VESEP program, the government contributes \$2 for every \$1 contributed by volunteers, with funding typically going towards operational equipment, vehicles, trucks, tankers, watercraft, trailers and minor facility improvements. See page 25 for more about VESEP.

Peter Everard, IGA General Manager Victoria, said IGA was very passionate about supporting local communities and was "incredibly proud" to support CFA through the IGA Community Chest program.

"We recognise the important role CFA plays in the local community and we hope that the Community Chest donations can continue to support volunteers, career firefighters, community educators and support personnel," Peter said.

"We look forward to continuing our partnership with CFA and helping communities across Victoria."

CFA Chief Officer Steve Warrington thanked IGA for their support.

"The generous IGA donations from the retailers and their customers directly benefit brigades in helping us protect the lives and property of Victorian families," he said.

STORY AMANDA BOLCH



Above: CFA CO Steve Warrington accepts a cheque from IGA Anglesea store manager and fourth lieutenant at Anglesea Fire Brigade Ryan Calvert

PHOTO: BLAIR DELLEMIJN

Support for the front

From a 2,000m² warehouse in Knoxfield in outer Melbourne, the staff of the State Logistics Centre (SLC) work directly to the CFA mission of protecting lives and property.

"We're part of that incident combat," said Manager Lawson Willoughby (pictured right). "One hat is business-as-usual including storage, distribution and procurement and the other hat is incident management preparedness. We become part of that operational army, serving the field by driving supplies to any fireground within five hours distance.

"That can be assembling and delivering equipment for staging areas or sandbags for flooding."

On-site and ready to go are two 20-foot containers. One contains a store with shelving and the other is a complete staging area office.

The SLC commercially contracts out a Monday to Friday 24-hour turnaround delivery to 23 district stores, 11 district mechanical officer stores and two training ground stores. It carries 1,400 stock items from helmet decals to

pallets of water, though the SLC's main range is personal protective clothing, couplings, adaptors and hose.

Perhaps the centre's most important task, however, is to control the inventory according to the season ahead. It also maintains an overview of all state stores so each of them only has to carry a minimum of stock.

"Experience helps us plan for a bad season and find the balance," continued Lawson.

"Ration packs perish after 24 months, water after 12 months and hydrate after nine months and we might distribute \$11 million of assets across a year.

"Most fires don't start until late afternoon so we need to move supplies when industry is closed. Many suppliers are in recess through summer so that has to be factored in too.

"We're operating at capacity and we give a three-fold return on investment by not outsourcing. Because we bulk buy, we can get the best value for CFA."

STORY LEITH HILLARD



PHOTO: LEITH HILLARD

Learning from incidents

Entrapments and burnovers

There are significant risks associated with fighting bushfires. Fire agencies, in particular, often find themselves in a situation where a fast-running or erratic fire can catch out crews, making it difficult for them to escape the fire.

The circumstances leading up to entrapments and burnovers mostly result from sudden changes in fire intensity and direction, usually following a wind change. There is often very little warning before the crew is overrun. In some cases, the change in fire behaviour occurs so suddenly that there's no time to do anything.

The devastating losses and injuries experienced over the years have resulted in the agencies across Australia focusing on preventing similar occurrences.

Improving our understanding of the environment at a particular moment is imperative to improving safety. But increasing the level of situational awareness can be extremely difficult when working in unfamiliar surroundings and reliant on radio communication. The crew leader's ability to consider what could go wrong before it does has to take into account a variety of environmental and structural considerations. What's the weather doing? What personnel do I have and what is their experience? Are the tasks appropriate for now and for the future? Do I have any triggers to adjust my plans?

CFA assessed 34 entrapment and burnover incidents and near misses that occurred between 2009 and 2015, including on Black Saturday. The research assessed critical control measures in each incident to help us better understand the factors that contribute to safety during extreme conditions.

The review concentrated on four critical control factors: people, equipment, information and management.

People

People's qualifications, competency, experience and fitness for duty at all levels of an operation.

Equipment

The design, fitness-for-purpose, availability, correct use and reliability of materials supplied for operational use or post incident.

Information

Briefings, pre-planning and local knowledge used to create situational awareness on the fireground and in incident management teams (IMTs).

Management

Structures, planning, supervision and doctrine created and deployed to achieve consistent outcomes during operations.

Control factors in each of the 34 incidents were rated based on the effect the controls had on the incident. Controls could provide positive feedback (where the control was present and worked as intended), negative feedback (the control was absent or failed to work) or no feedback (crew members didn't comment).



Summer bushfire campaign materials



Find everything you need to promote summer safety messages in **The very handy Template Toolkit**.

Resources include:

- digital and print artwork
- key messages
- audio and video files

The Summer Campaign 2016-17 materials can be found in the Marketing Materials section of the Toolkit, under the Bushfire/grassfire tab.

These are just some of the marketing resources available to support your brigade's community engagement during the summer fire season.

Check out the Template Toolkit  on cfaonline.cfa.vic.gov.au.

If you have any questions, email cfaprom@cfa.vic.gov.au or phone **9262 8314**.



A quick glance at the results matrix, below, shows that the people and equipment control factors were generally positive, which means they worked well. But there were many deficiencies in the areas of information and management.

Since the Linton tragedy, CFA has introduced a number of firefighting initiatives such as enhancements to crew protection systems and the adoption of Minimum Skills. There has been an increase in training covering safety and awareness of fire behaviour.

Equipment over the years has improved dramatically. It is clear that adequate processes exist for the design and acquisition of new materials, particularly for CFA trucks, protective clothing and operational tools. However, failures around equipment have been with auxiliary gear, such as the intercom systems, rather than crew protection. Overall, the review identified that the equipment was effective, though there is always room for improvement.

The review also identified a consistent pattern during entrapments and burn overs, with crews receiving limited briefings, having no pre-plans or local knowledge and having significant gaps in situational awareness usually around erratic fire behaviour, changes in weather conditions and tasking.

It also identified gaps in establishing a command structure with issues of disconnection between IMTs and sector at one end and strike teams and crews at the other end, poor or no planning of crew composition, lack of direct supervision and several issues around doctrine.

There has been a focus on placing qualified and competent people in leadership roles on the fireground and in IMTs. Recently, we have also

seen increased awareness and compliance with critical doctrine such as entrapment procedures, LACES, rural/urban interface (RUI) firefighting and situational awareness.

CFA's recently-released RUI video is the initial phase of the program to increase the awareness of asset protection measures and an understanding of procedures around RUI. In addition, recent changes to LACES have put a greater emphasis on LOOKOUT, particularly in bushfire interface environments and in intense fire activity.

It is very important to report entrapments or burnovers to CFA so we can further understand the effectiveness of improvements we have made over recent years.

When considering CFA's history and periodic tragedies such as Linton and Black Saturday, it's clear we have made significant improvements in critical risk controls for entrapment and burnover. There is a need at all levels to maintain standards and principles, especially for safety equipment, briefings and provision of information. The need for ongoing analysis, learning and continual improvements and sharing of this information is vital, and improvement in these areas will be an ongoing focus for CFA.

Share your concerns with Performance Improvement by commenting via EMV's Observation Sharing Centre: surveygizmo.com/s3/1449131/observation-sharing-centre.

STORY OPERATIONS PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT TEAM

Investigation number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	
Burnover/Entrapment	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	E	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	E	B	B	B	B	X	B	B	B	B	B	E	E	E	B	B	
People																																				
Qualified																																				
Experienced																																				
Fit for duty																																				
Competent																																				
Equipment																																				
Design																																				
Fit for purpose																																				
Used correctly																																				
Reliable																																				
Available																																				
Information																																				
Briefed																																				
Pre-planning																																				
Local knowledge																																				
Situational awareness																																				
Management																																				
Structure																																				
Planning																																				
Supervision																																				
Doctrine																																				

Control present and worked as intended
 Control absent or failed to work
 No feedback from crew members

No useful/relevant information due to nature/quality of report

Horsham power substation fire

SUMMARY

On a hot afternoon in November 2015, Horsham substation was damaged by fire resulting in a major power outage across Horsham and surrounding areas, which impacted communities. More than 17,000 residents lost electricity as the temperature reached the high 30s.

INCIDENT OVERVIEW

On 18 November at 5.39pm, it was reported that the main transformer at the substation had caught fire and two buildings on the site were under threat. The transformer, which has a capacity of 15,000 litres of vegetable oil, was leaking and on fire. The temperature was 39°C with 57km/h winds.

Crews and trucks from Horsham, Dimboola, Dooen, Green Lake, Murtoa, Vectis and Wonwondah brigades responded quickly and arrived to find the building well alight. Crews began their attack using foam when it was confirmed by Powercor that power was disconnected and the site was safe to enter.

Black smoke blanketed residential streets, advice warnings were issued immediately to the public and the Western Highway was closed to all outbound traffic. Victoria Police also closed the Henty Highway for a short period.

At the time, there were concerns it could take weeks to repair the damage and blackouts would continue during a period of extreme heat, putting the community at risk. However, when the transformer fire was extinguished and the adjacent building protected, the other two transformers on site were activated and power was progressively restored to customers. By 8pm the power was restored to all customers and the roads reopened.

Two firefighters were affected by heat stroke and treated by Ambulance Victoria. They were taken to hospital and released shortly after.

LESSONS IDENTIFIED

Safety Firefighters' safety is paramount so firefighters didn't enter the site until Powercor had confirmed the power was turned off (remotely) and a risk assessment was carried out before crews began the firefight.

Traffic management The early establishment of an incident emergency management team enabled clear and coordinated thinking around traffic management to reduce the impact on the community.

Water supply Crews used a range of water supplies to ensure adequate and continuous water was available at the scene. Using a combination of reticulated water, static water, council water and CFA tankers, a continuous supply of foam was maintained.



PHOTOS: MARK HARVEY



Personal protection The need for additional compressed air breathing apparatus (CABA) operators was identified and personnel were quickly sourced and responded from other brigades.

Information Information flow was quick and consistent using Powercor recorded messages, website, text messages and the FireReady app.

Importance of pre-planning The incident planning by Horsham Fire Brigade identified key exposures to be protected. The control room next to the fire-affected transformer was protected, which meant that a long-term outage at this substation was avoided. Establishing pre-plans provides a valuable opportunity to think through possible scenarios, potential opportunities, unusual problems and unintended consequences.

CONCLUSION

The impact of this fire on the health and economy of the Wimmera community could have been far reaching, but the successful planning and actions of CFA crews and Powercor prevented a crisis. The impact on the community was minimised.

The community had a sound understanding of the ramifications that this incident posed and appreciated it was resolved quickly.

STORY OPERATIONS PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT TEAM

Noble Park house fire

INCIDENT OVERVIEW

In the early hours of 18 August 2016, Dandenong Fire Brigade was alerted to a house at Noble Park. The smoke column was visible 500 metres away. En route, the facts were gathered by the crew and communication was established between the responding vehicles. A plan was developed so the crew could hit the ground running. Two CFA pumpers quickly arrived on scene with an MFB pumper one minute behind, followed by support vehicles.

The brigade was met by a house well alight. Neighbours told crews there were two people inside, one of whom needed a walking frame for mobility.

Incident Controller and Dandenong Fire Brigade Acting Station Officer Josh Redfern reported 'not yet under control' immediately as firefighters began an internal search. The MFB crew did an external attack, knocking down the main fire to help CFA carry out a fast primary search.

In the search, they found and rescued a woman within 30 seconds of entering the house. She was cared for by emergency medical response (EMR) trained firefighters until Ambulance Victoria arrived. The second occupant was found in the kitchen at the other end of the house as the crew continued the search. The man was found around two minutes after the woman but, despite the best attempts by firefighters and an Ambulance Victoria crew, he couldn't be revived.

Despite the tragic loss, Josh Redfern praised firefighters for the dynamic response to this fire. The attending fire crews put in a fantastic effort and the incident was brought under control within 30 minutes.

WHAT WORKED WELL

- The incident controller worked towards an objective and conveyed tasks accordingly to crews on the fireground.

- The rapid response of crews ensured enough personnel were on the fireground to "have sufficient crew to meet the control objective and implement the chosen strategy" (SOP 9.28).
- Having the appropriate equipment – trucks, thermal imaging camera, comms between CFA and MFB and personal protective equipment.
- Crews on the fireground have responded and trained together for some time. Training was instrumental to the safe and efficient operation of this incident. Training for proficiency helps crews carry out their roles well in adverse circumstances.
- An after-action review or debrief was carried out on the following shift on the next day. This allowed for internal evaluation of the incident and an opportunity for all members to have input.
- The teamwork demonstrated on scene with Ambulance Victoria and MFB was outstanding. CFA, MFB and Ambulance Victoria are dedicated to providing a common operating platform in all areas of service delivery, equipment and training.

WHAT WE COULD DO BETTER

- We need ongoing training and development for our crew leaders and prospective incident controllers to help them deal with dynamic and challenging incidents. We train and prepare our people for competency but don't always have the time or resources to push for proficiency.

CONCLUSION

Following this type of incident, members need to be assured that CFA can't undo what's already been done and cannot turn back time. In this tragic incident, as with others we have been exposed to, the call to Triple Zero was well after the fire had taken hold.

Despite the loss of the resident, all members at the scene were proud of their dynamic response to this fire. This incident was a multi-agency event involving CFA career and volunteer members, MFB, Ambulance Victoria and Victoria Police all working together to best achieve our aim.

STORY OPERATIONS PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT TEAM

Think about your VESEP grant

Brigades still have time to prepare a vehicle, equipment or building grant submission for the Victorian Emergency Services Equipment Program (VESEP) and get support from district staff.

Submissions for the 2017 round of funding applications open in March.

North East Region's Andrew Hodson, one of eight Finance Officer – Brigades around the state, urges brigades not to leave their applications until the last minute.

"You want to make sure your application has the best chance of approval," said Andrew. "Think about how much your activity or piece of equipment is going to cost. Don't be rushed when applications start."

For brigades wanting to buy a piece of equipment, Andrew's advice is to first ask the catchment team whether the item meets approved standards for CFA and conforms to the overall catchment and district plan.

As VESEP grant applications are first vetted and prioritised by the catchment team, Andrew said it made sense to involve them early in the process.

"Vehicles in particular need operational approval before you can go ahead, so it's vital you check with the catchment team whether that item can be bought.

"Your ops manager will have final approval, and remember that they

will also be looking at it from the bigger picture to consider if there's a genuine operational need. There may be other ways for that need to be covered or other plans on the cards."

If you are considering a new building or major modification, it's really important to approach the district early and register concepts with CFA's VESEP minor works project manager.

Andrew added that a successful application for a VESEP grant also needed to include a business plan around the item a brigade wanted to purchase.

"That is not just a plan for how you are going to buy it or fundraise for it. You need to provide costings for how you are going to store, maintain and possibly replace it."

It's also important for brigades to gather supporting information to make sure their submissions to VESEP make a compelling case.

"You want enough information to give a sound rationale for why you need that purchase, without going overboard. If you write *War and Peace* no one will read it," said Andrew, who advised brigades to look at the example applications on VFBV's website.

STORY SONIA MACLEAN

District 8 interfaith tour

Senior operational and community education staff from District 8 joined with other emergency services for an interfaith tour of local places of worship.

"This was an opportunity to see the diversity within the local area, focusing on the religious and faith dimension of multiculturalism," said event organiser and Community Education Coordinator Steve Corrigan. "With more than 20 worship sites in our area, it's important we understand different faiths and their customs from the inside."

The tour group visited the Hindu Shri Shiva Vishnu Temple in Carrum Downs, the Sikh Gurdwara Sri Guru Granth Sahib in Keysborough, the Turkish Islamic Cultural Centre and Mosque in Keysborough and the Sri Lankan Dhamma Sarana Buddhist Temple in Keysborough.

At each site they were greeted by a faith leader who passed on information about their beliefs, practices and community in Australia. They looked inside each place of worship as members of the community went about their routines of worship.

CFA Multicultural Liaison Officer Nada El-Masri is also a volunteer at Noble Park Fire Brigade. She is the first person appointed to this position so she's blazed a trail with her own tailored uniform with a loose-fitting shirt.

"So many people don't know about Islam and other faiths," she said. "The tour was their chance to ask any questions and learn details like Muslim women not shaking hands – we put our hand on our heart instead.

"The leader at the Buddhist Temple talked about external fire but also linked fire to inner challenges relevant to emotions such as anger, joy, love, hatred and fear, so we were led through different perspectives.

"There was a question about firefighters fasting through Ramadan and the answer was that they wouldn't be required to fast. There were also

questions about people with head coverings wearing helmets. I wear a thin turban under my helmet when I turn out so it's not an issue.

"I think we came away aware of how much we have in common rather than how different we are."

STORY LEITH HILLARD



PHOTO: STEVE CORRIGAN

Group officers planning for risk

All stories by Leith Hillard



PHOTO: MERREWYN CHAPMAN

John Chapman, Westmere Group, District 16

While 19 brigades might sound unwieldy, they form a tight unit in District 16's Westmere Group to the east of the Grampians.

Group Officer John Chapman described them as close-knit brigades in plains country with some stony rises. It's predominantly sheep and cropping land with areas of low-lying crops becoming water logged in this year's spring rains.

John is pretty specific about the timing of the fire season: "it traditionally runs from early January and tails off about 20 February.

"The risk is fast-running grassfires on a north-westerly, and the ones that come earlier in the day are a worry. At Streatham in '77 it was running at 20 kilometres an hour which takes a bit of getting hold of."

The largest recent local fire was 2015 in Moyston with Westmere Group attacking the head as it approached their boundary.

"We had a couple of lucky saves last year when fires with plenty of fuel and gathering momentum ran into green paddocks," continued John.

"As soon as the grass dries off towards the end of December, we'll burn off hundreds of kilometres of roadsides. Our brigades are very well organised with breakburning and trigger the burns with drip torches on motorbikes. These are followed by heavy tankers, both CFA and privately owned, and smaller units patrol the burnt areas."

The cost saving to the community from the group's roadside burning has been analysed by Westmere DGOs David Allen from Woorndoo and Mark Gubbins from Chatsworth. If the activity was paid for, the cost would range from \$650-\$850 per kilometre. With the group burning up to 480 kilometres each year, this shows the enormous value of their voluntary work.

The group runs a 12.30pm radio sched every day during the Fire Danger Period, and an additional 10am sched occurs every Total Fire Ban day with each brigade broadcasting its human and firefighting resources.

During that mid-morning sched and under extreme conditions, the group officer may suggest that group members cease mechanical harvesting activity. The seven deputy group officers vote and, if required, a deciding vote can be made by the group officer.

"We've been informally running mechanical harvesting advice for 40-odd years," said John. "With wind on top of heat everyone's thinking about forward rate of spread, so there's always been pretty good uptake of the recommendation and the harvesters go quiet."

CFA tankers are always crewed first for a fire in the group area, backed up by an army of 400 private units, 200 of them heavy units including ex-CFA trucks or privately-built appliances.

There are about 500 listening sets in houses and private appliances across the group. Extra listening sets were purchased on top of the group's standard digital allocation to ensure the local listening public didn't miss any information.

"Operationally, half of Stoneleigh's brigade members are women," said John of his home brigade, "and that's most essential. With these new high-tech tankers, a lot of firefighting can be done from the cabin and a couple of people could contain an incident very well before more tankers are on scene.

"Generally, though, someone will stay at home. Properties here tend to be well prepared and sheep allow you to have eaten out areas around the houses."

Doug Afford, Southern Mallee Group, District 18

Group Officer Doug Afford spoke to *Brigade* magazine in late October from the top of a hill looking across the undulating cropping country and "a heck of a lot of growth" in his group area.

"We're 100 kilometres north to south and about 70 kilometres east to west," he said.

Group members often start their fire season in October with harvesting beginning in the final week of that month but "nothing doing as yet," said Doug.

"With growth like this, people will take a bit more care with harvesting. Often our mornings are fine and farmers might call it a day at noon then come back later. It's common sense that prevails and the voluntary code of harvesting has been well received here.

"Most of our members are farmers. If they see smoke, they check pagers, contact neighbours via UHF then deploy if needed.

"Because of intense cropping there are very few fallow paddocks. Once the legume crops are harvested, it leaves reasonably bare paddocks which will slow a fire down and stop it."

The group often finds itself out of synch with the statewide imposition of Total Fire Bans.

"We often have a bad day the day before," said Doug.

Risk in the Southern Mallee Group often comes from lightning strikes in the Wyperfeld National Park turning into fast-moving grassfires.

For the fifth year, the water bombing helicopter and its accompanying Bird Dog, the air attack supervisor's aircraft, will be stationed at Sea Lake.

"This year there are firefighting water tanks based at the Hopetoun aerodrome," said Doug. "We also get the benefit of the fixed wings flying out of the Linga airbase.

"The aircraft support us in the sandy scrub where our trucks don't go."

All vehicles in the group are four-wheel drives with Patchewollock and Hopetoun West trucks on super-singles.



PHOTO: SUE AFFORD

Colin Brown, Corryong Group, District 24

"It's absolutely picturesque at the moment," said Group Officer Colin Brown, "and we're not expecting anything between now and Christmas but then, if the rain stays away, look out!"

"We're very self-sufficient up here and we need to be. We're two hours uphill in a tanker all the way from Tallangatta, our neighbouring group.

"A bad day is high, swirly winds and lightning. We're the last in line for Victorian weather which means resources are spent by the time it hits us.

"Traditionally fires come from New South Wales into Victoria on the north-westerlies and we're in constant contact with the RFS [NSW Rural Fire Service] on bad days.

"Our Ops Manager Paul King has put a lot of work into cross-border liaison. He and his opposite number in RFS and our border captains are working on a Memorandum of Understanding, but the ground rules are already set out.

"Pre-determined dispatch [PDD] of aircraft has been a sensational development. There are two PDD fixed-wing bombers out of Benambra and the Super Scooper out of Albury is also Victorian funded, but if it's not in use it can be sent anywhere into NSW to help out.

"Their rotary and fixed wing aircraft have helped us out with fires close to the border.

"This is also the first year of a DELWP helicopter operating out of Ovens on PDD."

Nestled in the foothills of the Snowy Mountains, the Corryong Group area is about 90 kilometres end to end, taking in the wild country around Tom Groggin that has seen long-running bushfires.

Vehicle calculations add the five DELWP ultralights and tanker and the HVP trucks to the group's eight four-wheel-drive tankers and three slip-ons.

"The unwritten law up here is that we need each other's support," said Colin. "We have to get along and we just do."



Simon Armytage, Serra Group, District 5

Mid October and “it’s as wet as it’s ever been” across the Serra Group area according to Group Officer Simon Armytage.

“Last year the fire season went from October to April but this year it’s more likely to be January to April. We can’t do our pre-season exercise because you couldn’t drive a truck off the bitumen – you’d be stuck for a week.

“We burn off about 60 kilometres of our roadsides but we won’t even look at that until January. We rotate our young people through the roles and they get to see what smoke and radiant heat can do.”

The four brigades of Serra Group lie at the southern tip of the Grampians and Simon has been group officer since 1992. So how does a fire tend to run in the Serra Group area?

“There’s always going to be a south-westerly change,” said Simon, “and it’s always going to blow harder than it does from the north. We very rarely get a fire on a south westerly and the wind always seems to drop on nightfall. We always put most of the appliances on the eastern side of the fire.”

Simon goes to every fire in his group area because that’s where he believes he’s most effective.

“I direct from the fireground,” he said, “and sectorise the fire as fast as possible, keeping some trucks back on the flank. Firefighters love to get to the front of the fire but you have to keep appliances back because it always flares up again. You need to keep them spread out.”

One factor making a huge difference to local fire response now is the

pre-determined dispatch of the two 802 air tractors from Hamilton airbase simultaneous with brigades being paged.

“This will be our third season,” continued Simon, “and it’s been absolutely brilliant.”



PHOTO: ANTHONY GRAHAM

Robert Wight, Tarra Group, District 10

From the Gippsland coast to the Strzeleckis with Yarram as the employment centre; from communities of sea changers and retirees to the summer influx of holiday makers, the Tarra Group area is one of contrasts.

“The challenges are chalk and cheese too, from last year,” said Group Officer and Woodside brigade member Robert Wight. “In 2015, the dams were empty and we were heading into November’s Whitelaws Track fire. This year it’s an oasis, although we can have dryness in one part of our group when it’s wet at the other end.

“Being a strong dairying area, money is pretty tight at the moment. Only two of our brigades have two appliances but it’s hard to ask our communities to dig too deep.”

While this is Robert’s first term as group officer, he praised the group management team which has “a lot of depth. We’re also very lucky to have four new young and very enthusiastic captains and there’s a mix of youth and experience across the group generally.”

Robert is determined that members enjoy their volunteering.

“When we come together,” he said, “it’s important people enjoy each other’s company and don’t feel obligated to come.

“When you go through dry farming conditions, people can withdraw into themselves so it’s especially important to look out for each other.

“About four years ago, we found that brigades were getting distant from each other and members on strike teams were strangers.

“We started rotating group training every two months around brigades. The host brigade will lay on a barbecue and create and manage the night’s training which becomes a social night.

“It really spurs brigades on. We’ve had guest speakers like fire investigators and 60 to 70 people for each event. We’re all getting to know each other and no brigade is left out.

“It’s been an absolute positive move.”



PHOTO: SALLY WIGHT

Lesley Read Hilldene Fire Brigade, District 12

faces of
CFA



PHOTO: GEOFF READ

at Fiskville. Our daughter Sheryl and son-in-law Michael are also members at Axe Creek, so it’s very much in the family.

What was the first incident you attended?

Operationally, it was a non-fatal MVA [motor vehicle accident]. I remember how the training fell into place – it just became natural.

As a peer, a brigade that hadn’t had much exposure to peers had attended a fatal house fire. I went to their station with an experienced peer who conducted the session, and I remember being terrified that I wouldn’t be able to support these people.

What incident has had the greatest impact on you?

Black Saturday. It felt like a day but also a lifetime.

I spent time at the Kilmore staging area, providing peer support and helping with practical assistance. I got around to as many of the crews as possible coming in from the fireground and asked what I could do to help them. Often it was getting them something to eat or putting them in touch with their families.

I spent many days trying to get to as much of the district as possible. Travelling through the fire-affected areas was often overwhelming, but seeing CFA and other organisations working together for a common goal was inspirational.

Hopefully I made a difference and was able to help other people in the yellows in practical ways.

What CFA training have you got the most out of?

All my peer training – everything from suicide prevention to transgender issues.

We now find that brigades that have used peers become an advocate for us. I’ve seen a big change since 2009 in the way brigades openly welcome us to talk to them. So often I’ll visit a brigade and there’ll be members there still affected by the Ash Wednesday and Black Saturday fires.

The taboo of talking to a peer has lifted in a lot of brigades. I think individuals and brigades now understand that they can’t do it all by themselves and peers are available to help them.

What are the benefits of volunteering in CFA?

I love doing what I do, and giving back to the community I live in is important for me. Volunteering has given me far more than I have put back.

What has been the highlight of your time in CFA?

The friendships I’ve made. I’m really passionate about CFA and what it stands for.

CFA is a great family – dysfunctional at times, but great. Every brigade I go to I feel welcome.

INTERVIEW BY LEITH HILLARD

What are your CFA roles?

I joined Hilldene Fire Brigade 15 years ago and I’m currently the secretary and treasurer. I’ve been a peer coordinator since 2007 and the District 12 peer coordinator for three years. An operations manager thought I was a good listener with an ability to talk to anyone and asked me to join the program.

I was operational but stepped off the truck when I became a peer. I’m conscious of only wearing one hat so I can focus on what I love doing best, which is being a peer.

Why did you join?

After a large fire at Glenaroua, another wife and I decided to join. It started as a bit of if-you-can’t-beat-them-join-them, but we both loved it.

My husband Geoff is the Captain of Hilldene and has a family history with CFA. His father Chester was one of the founders of Somers Fire Brigade, then went on to become a region officer and instructor

Buddy brigades across regions

As a standalone brigade not aligned with a group and two hours from both Marysville and Mansfield, Woods Point, deep in the Great Divide, can rightly claim to be isolated. This old mining and timber township is run by a border collie named Skye and has 38 residents and about 70 houses.

The township was destroyed by the Black Friday fires of 1939 but most of the town's 750 residents crammed into mine shafts and survived. The township was again threatened in late 2006 by a lightning strike at Mt Terrible and many residents evacuated.

Upper Ferntree Gully First Lieutenant Mark Goodchild was strike team leader of crews tasked with saving the town. During a week-long deployment, connections formed between Woods Point and Upper Ferntree Gully members have now developed into a buddy relationship between the two brigades four hours apart.

The practical benefits are two brigades swapping skills and training together twice a year, one with an urban skill set and the other with bushcraft such as chainsaw use and four-wheel driving.

"We initially passed on some of our equipment and doubled their hose supply and we've since given them branch and fittings," said Mark who remains one of the dynamos behind the buddy relationship.

"We're a brigade in the lower Dandenong Ranges with two four-wheel drives but a lot

of members without the driving experience. Woods Point is in rough and mountainous terrain where there are dirt roads and off-roading.

"We take our rookies and recruits up there for a fantastic and very long bonding day of driving and training that gives them a feel for what it's like to be deployed on a strike team."

In fact, one Upper Ferntree Gully member was deployed on their first strike team just one week after a training day at Woods Point.

"Woods Point had the car training prop this year," continued Mark, "and we trained on it together which was a bonus. We all trained together on their 2.4C medium tanker. We all draught water out of their river, the Goulburn.

"We get more out of it than Woods Point."

Woods Point Training Officer Andrew Merlo might disagree.

"They bring their ultralights up and we might run a grass and scrub scenario with our tanker as the mothership," said Andrew.

"Their captain 'Mudguts' [Peter Smith] once came up with their tanker in terrible weather including snow and ran crew leader training, so they really are dedicated but also very generous.

"They continue to pass on their surplus equipment including a barbecue, so they arrive with the bread and we cater for the day."

Upper Ferntree Gully has 35 operational members and responds to an average 160

calls a year. Woods Point has 20 members, 12 of them operational, and responds eight to 10 times a year including into the Thompson Water Catchment in their brigade area.

Andrew remembers Woods Point being "left to its own devices" and declared undefendable during the 2006 bushfire, until current Deputy Chief Officer Garry Cook flew in by helicopter with Operations Manager Stewart Kreltszheim and "turned the tactics around".

Garry remembers "being about one hundred metres off the ground above the Woods Point Fire Station and we could see 42 people from the community looking up at what they were considering was hope. We retreated with the leaders of the fire brigade and the local police officer to build a plan that we then took back to the remaining community members.

"Woods Point brigade, supported by the then DSE, had conducted several planned burns over the preceding two years [before 2006] so we had an idea of the fuel load.

"Ultimately District 13 strike teams were mobilised to defend Woods Point. They were initially supported by Operations Manager Paul King and ran the patrols and became the deliverers of messages and the source of truth for the community."

And the seed of a very fruitful relationship between two buddy brigades.

STORY LEITH HILLARD



PHOTO: MARK GOODCHILD

CFA Pride flies the flag

CFA and other emergency services participated in the Pride March for the first time in early 2015. The annual march supports Victoria's Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transsexual Intersex (LGBTI) community and then Chief Officer Euan Ferguson said, "This is about CFA recognising that we need to encourage diversity within the organisation – and we're really proud to be here."

The CFA Pride Facebook page now has 1,300 followers. It aims to foster equality and promotes the contribution of the LGBTI community within CFA, building a social network where members can interact and organise events.

Terence Sanford is in his second term as Noble Park captain and is one of three LGBTI members in his brigade. He's also one of three CFA Pride ambassadors.

"I'm happy and proud to be an out firefighter," said Terence. "I'm open about who I am and I have great support at my brigade where I work with about 60 other members of 17 different nationalities.



"As a Pride ambassador, I'm a contact person. We want to let people know that CFA is friendly and welcoming and spread more into the grassroots of the organisation. A brigade is made up of different personalities and characteristics and it's important that LGBTI members feel comfortable in this working environment.

"CFA Pride is an opportunity for solidarity if someone is having hassles and doesn't know where to go. Not everyone is in a community, a family or at a time of life where they feel able to come out.

"They need to hear the positive stuff and we can help."

Any member is welcome to

confidentially contact CFA Pride at [facebook.com/cfapride](https://www.facebook.com/cfapride) or email cfapride@cfa.vic.gov.au

STORY LEITH HILLARD

PHOTO: LEITH HILLARD

Diversity and inclusion

Many brigades are doing excellent work boosting their diversity and being more inclusive.

CFA is setting our inclusion and diversity priorities and we want to know what you think our priorities should be. Let us know about effective local diversity and inclusion initiatives that others can learn from.

Call Angela Seach on **9262 8446** or email contact.diversityandinclusion@cfa.vic.gov.au

Volunteers helping volunteers

A partnership of volunteers supporting volunteers in the south-east is keeping five fire stations and their trucks spick-and-span.

Since 2014, a team of hard workers who live with disabilities and disadvantage have spent one day a week, 48 weeks a year, between Wonthaggi and Inverloch fire stations. There are currently nine volunteers from not-for-profit Connecting Skills who sweep and mop the turnout rooms and engine bays and wash all vehicles inside and out.



PHOTO: BILL BARBOUR

Wonthaggi Captain Kim O'Connor couldn't be more appreciative; this is a brigade with six vehicles so it's a big task.

"It's a huge time-saving for us," he said. "As volunteers ourselves we know just how precious time is, so their work has enormous value.

"They're looking after the operational side of the fire brigade and maintaining our station and trucks to a high standard. We have Tanker 2 at our satellite station in Cape Paterson and they also get over there once a month."

One CFA volunteer is always in attendance to move the trucks around for access. Everyone in the working crew has their own hook in the station for their CFA caps and overalls sponsored by Total Workwear with joint CFA/Connecting Skills logos.

Sharon Exton from Connecting Skills matches Kim's enthusiasm.

"Our people are an untapped resource," she said. "They have so much to offer and this partnership with CFA is just brilliant. Every time the trucks turn out they look immaculate. The members of our crew see them around town and know, 'I did that'.

"It's community participation that gives them pride, citizenship and equality. They're really making a meaningful contribution and proving they're capable and productive."

The Connecting Skills members also volunteer at Glen Alvie, Walkerville and Venus Bay fire stations.

STORY LEITH HILLARD

Wandong's daytime recruitment bonanza

Wandong Fire Brigade was increasingly reliant on just a couple of people for daytime turnout and scanned their community for a solution. They saw it in local stay-at-home parents and targeted them in a recruitment drive, with great success.

"Last fire season we were struggling," confirmed Captain Yorin Miller. "It was getting too tight and we were too reliant on two or three people. We could get a driver or a crew but we couldn't get both."

Proximity to Melbourne means many locals commute out of the area for work including Yorin, who's an engineer for Qantas at the airport.

"The flipside is I do shift work which means I'm around a heck of a lot," he said, "but stay-at-home parents are often close to home."

Yorin brainstormed with Brigade Training Officer Liam Edwards and Community Safety Officer Amanda Allsop, and each member engaged in the recruitment process was assigned a clearly defined role.

"The key thing was establishing a really specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely goal," continued Yorin. "For us that was five new members by the end of June 2016 within the target group of stay-at-home parents."

"To reach them, we arranged three drop-in sessions at the station during the day during the week. Bring your kids, have a cuppa and a snack, ask questions and have a look around.

"We created them as events on our Facebook page so they'd come up on our followers' news feeds, and we got an article and photos in our local paper."

Yorin also gave a talk about the brigade at the local primary school's Friday assembly which is always well attended by parents. The "Hey Mum and Dad, join CFA" talk certainly went down well with the kids!

Later that day, the brigade set the truck up in the car park during school pick-up so the kids could have a look. They also left around 200 flyers under the windscreen wipers of all nearby cars and in local shops.

"We were building momentum but we kept the campaign short and intense," said Yorin. "We were getting families involved and showing them that we were family friendly."

"We also wanted to address diversity in the brigade. We've had a strong culture of equality and women in the brigade. About 15 years ago, we had a group of local mums from the primary school who were members together so we had that in mind."

The drop-in sessions led to six new members for Wandong and one for Clonbinane. They're all women aged from 16 to their early 40s with the majority in their 30s.

When it came to training, the seven were asked what time best suited them. Fridays from 12.30pm to 3pm for two months was agreed on, with shift workers and trainers Yorin and Liam fitting it into their schedules.

The understanding was always that family comes first. Kids were welcome to attend, bringing their bikes and scooters and being provided with a snack.

A vital part of Wandong's success was recognising that school pick-up time had to mark the end of training. But what about stay-at-home parents turning out to an incident when the clock is inching towards 3pm?

The brigade came up with a creative workaround.

"The local childcare provider at the school has agreed that, if you're eligible for a government rebate, care will be free for parents who are called out to a job up until 6pm," explained Yorin. "It's not full childcare – it's only for the school-age kids – but it's one less thing they need to stress about."

"Admittedly there's a certain extent of work-it-out-as-we-go. You can only pre-plan so much."

All seven members have now completed their assessments and are training with the wider brigade on Wednesday nights as well as continuing the Friday daytime training sessions.

"We don't train on Sundays because that's a family day and we aim for a bit of CFA/life balance," continued Yorin.

"We'll be able to get a few turnouts under their belts before summer really hits. We have an average of 110 to 140 incidents a year, so their contribution is going to be really valuable."

STORY LEITH HILLARD

PHOTO: YVETTE CURLIS



Battery-operated tools power brigade



Apollo Bay Fire Brigade is the first CFA brigade in the state to carry a permanent set of battery-operated tools for vehicle rescue thanks to a Victorian Government grant.

In late September, the brigade received two Lukas eDraulic rescue tools – a combination tool and small cutter – to be used for the time-critical task of cutting occupants out of vehicles after an accident.

Although they are more expensive to buy and maintain, battery-powered rescue tools have

some compelling advantages such as being easier to use and far quicker to set up.

When it comes to specialist rescue, Apollo Bay brigade services a fair proportion of the Great Ocean Road, working together with local SES units in often challenging circumstances among the area's famous bushland, cliffs and slopes.

Captain Dave Howell said his members attend a large number of off-road incidents and he's impressed by battery-powered tools which, unlike the traditional hydraulic models, don't need to



PHOTOS: LEAH BEAMISH

stay tethered to a cumbersome 50kg pump. "The speed of setting up is a massive bonus given we often need to physically carry our gear out to the accident," he said.

"And they are quiet too – which is much more comfortable for the patient and for the operators."

Dave said he was stoked to be receiving the tools through a Victorian Emergency Services Equipment Program (VESEP) grant after many years of fundraising and advocating for the tools' use at CFA.

"Our community has been fantastic supporting us to make this purchase – this will benefit not just the locals but tourists and holidaymakers passing through," he said.

Under VESEP, equipment is part-funded through the brigade and supported through a government grant.

STORY SONIA MACLEAN

Nulla Vale's remarkable vols

In late September, Nulla Vale Fire Brigade celebrated the service of six members who, between them, have served CFA for 335 years.

Brigade Captain Peter Hayes opened the event by talking about the commitment of the six men who've been CFA members for between 50 and 70 years. Minister for Emergency Services James Merlino then emphasised the commitment of emergency services volunteers and gave service medals and CFA Life Membership to five of the men (pictured left to right): Colin Paterson (55 years' service), Michael Walsh (55 years), Denis Connors (50 years), Walter Connors (55 years) and former captain Noel Rainey (70 years). Don Paterson (50 years) didn't attend the event.

Noel Rainey joined CFA more than 70 years ago when he was 15 years old. Noel's family is also committed to the brigade with his wife and daughter both clocking up more than 25 years and his son, who is the first lieutenant, with more than 15 years' service.

Local businesses raised \$1,300 to show their appreciation for CFA's service to the community, and this money paid for the event to salute the six remarkable volunteers.

STORY ERIC THOMAS



PHOTO: AMY HUME, MIDLAND EXPRESS

Cape Clear Unit Citation



PHOTO: TERRY KELLY

An unexpected invitation for lunch with Emergency Management Commissioner Craig Lapsley in attendance alerted Cape Clear Fire Brigade members that a surprise was in store.

"Today we will be honouring four members of the Cape Clear Fire Brigade, who, on 13 November 2014, attended a fast-moving grassfire," said Captain Michael Rowe.

"Donald Coward, Neil Shiells, Jim McKay and John McNabb formed the crew that found a property owner slumped next to a fence. Due to the prompt actions of the members, their skill and dedication, not only did they save the life of the property owner but significantly reduced the spread of the fire."

The four members were then presented with the Chief Officer's Unit Citation for Courage; something that had been kept a secret from the recipients and the wider brigade.

"Don and John acted as a human tent, covering themselves and the man with a blanket and water from water bottles to cool his burns," said Michael. "They're both first aiders and John is a trained nurse, but they were nearly collapsing in the conditions."

"There were 60-foot pine trees on fire, exploding cars and burning sheds and it was a chain reaction of one person shielding another person shielding another person. Neil and Jim in the tanker suppressed the fire."

"They were under the blanket for one and half hours until the ambulance came, the fire was suppressed and the gentleman was airlifted."

"The humanity of it was incredible; it's going beyond courage. They had the strength of faith in each other. Everyone was keeping everyone else alive."

Congratulations to the four members.

STORY SAMANTHA PLATER

Truganina's new recruits



PHOTO: COURTESY OF TRUGANINA BRIGADE

Truganina Fire Brigade worked hard to get 11 new members through training in time for summer.

The recruits trained every Tuesday night and full Saturdays from late July to September.

"It's a big commitment," said Scott Parker, who is Truganina secretary, treasurer and fourth lieutenant. Although he's the brigade's only qualified trainer, he's been supported by a roster of other members.

"These 11 range in age from 16/17 up to someone in their 40s. Three of them are coming up from our Juniors and three are women. Six of them have been previous non-operational CFA members and the other five are new to CFA. One is of Indian descent, one has just moved here from Europe and another is here on a student visa, so there's a lot of diversity there; a good mix."

"They have a range of availabilities during the week which is something we really targeted in the recruiting process, and I think six of them are likely to make it to our first truck."

"We get quite a few membership enquiries coming through our website and the CFA website. Third Lieutenant Rodney Walkden set up a good interview process where we find out where people live in relation to the station."

Captain Colleen Goodfellow runs a local business so can easily turn out. She agreed that it hasn't been difficult to attract new members.

"We run information sessions so people know what they're getting into," she said. "Interviews are with one or two of our brigade management team and we're also lucky to have a human resources professional in our brigade who does recruiting for a living. That's a bonus."

STORY LEITH HILLARD

Warracknabeal's 125th celebrations

It was a big weekend in Warracknabeal, population 2,500, when the brigade celebrated its 125th anniversary in mid-October.

One ex-member travelled from Darwin while others came from Shepparton, Geelong and Mildura for the weekend-long reunion nine months in the planning.

It kicked off on Friday night with a torchlight parade led by Chief Officer Steve Warrington and brigade Captain Cameron Whelan.

"We were supported by eight other visiting brigades from a range of groups," said Cameron. "Our local band, SES and the St Arnaud Pipe Band also marched."

"From a brigade point of view, the terrific turnout from locals along the route was all we needed. People were clapping and calling out 'thank you' and 'well done'."

"It was 25 years since we last had a torchlight parade so a lot of our members had never taken part in one. It was well worth waiting for."

The annual combined dinner was held on Saturday night, with 'combined' referring to the brigade and the auxiliary.

Local caterers provided a sit-down meal before service medals were presented.

One of the most significant was the presentation of a replica of The Horrockses Trophy by Operations Manager Dale Russell, accepted by Cameron and ex-Captain Digger Winsall on behalf of the brigade. The Horrockses Trophy used to be awarded to CFA members who saved a life, with the shield remaining with the member's brigade until another member received it.

In 1937, police constable and brigade member Francis Marsh a boy from drowning in Lake Hindmarsh and was awarded the shield. Digger Winsall grew up at the fire station and remembers Francis Marsh coming into the station and mussing up his hair!

"This came as a big surprise to members who didn't know it was coming," said Cameron. "We will get it mounted and it will hang proudly in the station."

"The other major presentation was an Outstanding Service Award to Jeff Adams who was a group officer for more than 30 years."

"It was a great night."

"My message to everyone was, 'This is your night. Thank you. Well done.'"

"We also recognised and thanked partners and

children who allow us to do what we do."

The final event on the anniversary calendar was Sunday open day at the station attended by plenty of locals. Competition material was on display along with old uniforms and photo albums.

"The 125th is a very significant anniversary and we really feel we made the most of it," said Cameron.

Warracknabeal has about 70 members, 35 of them operational and 20 in the auxiliary. The brigade attends an average 35 to 40 incidents a year.

It also has an active social club which organises about six events across the year from footy and bowls nights to the Christmas party. These usually double as fundraising events and include three firewood-cutting bees where money is shared between the brigade, Scouts, Guides and playgroup.

Congratulations to all Warracknabeal members past and present on 125 years.

STORY LEITH HILLARD



Left: Bronwyn McIntyre, James Haworth, Neil Adams, Ian McLean, Geoff Ward and Craig Byron

PHOTO: NICOLE CHRISTIAN

Help Mornington brigade celebrate

To celebrate Mornington Fire Brigade's centenary, brigade members have organised a series of events for next year and they'd like your help to make it a great year.

The brigade will be making a special contribution to the Mornington Peninsula Shire's Australia Day in Mornington on Thursday 26 January 2017, including:

- brigade members and Fire Museum fire trucks leading the Australia Day parade along Main Street to Mornington Park
- the Chief Officer taking part in the flag-raising ceremony in Mornington Park and giving a speech to the public about the brigade centenary

- a multi-brigade torchlight procession from Mornington Park to Mornington Pier.

On Saturday 28 January, the brigade will hold an open day at the fire station where the community can engage with brigade members, tour the fire station facilities, look at the historic Fire Museum fire trucks and the brigade's current vehicles and equipment and view special fire brigade memorabilia displays. There will also be a 100-year book for sale.

To supplement the displays, the brigade would like donations or loan items related to the brigade's history. If you have old helmets, boots, belt axe and key, uniform items or photos you'd like displayed, phone 5975 2203.

Later in the year, the brigade will host a community cocktail party at the fire station, which will be an opportunity for people to share stories about the contribution the brigade and its members have made to the community.

The brigade will also be constructing a 100-year community wall and, for a small donation, members of the community can have their name displayed as a sponsor of the wall in recognition of the brigade's 100 years.

To find out more, go to morningtonfirebrigade.com.au.

STORY TROY THORNTON



PHOTO: DARYL MASLEN

Promoting youth, art and Indigenous culture

As a way to attract more young people to CFA and to expose CFA members to Indigenous culture, Broadford Fire Brigade Captain Jamie Atkins set up a project that included Indigenous and non-Indigenous teens from Broadford Secondary College.

Jamie, himself an Indigenous man, wanted people in his community to be proud of their young people and CFA, and for everyone to learn more about the local Tungerung Indigenous people.

Thirty students from years 8 to 10 joined the Koori Dreaming Art Project that resulted in their design coming to life on the doors of Broadford Fire Station.

Using his contacts, Jamie got material donated by the community, and was privileged to have nationally-renowned Indigenous artist Mick Harding run a series of workshops for the students. Many of Mick's designs are on show in the Melbourne Museum and it's been very exciting for the students to be able to learn from him.

Broadford Koori Engagement Support Officer Tracey Phillips said she "hasn't seen the students so engaged and excited about something in a long time. They are so involved in every aspect of the project".

"It was important to design something that was relevant to the local area," said Mick.

The artwork features Bunjil the eagle and Waang the crow, two ancestral symbols significant to the tribes of the Kulin nation. The water is Sunday Creek in flood and the tree includes a scar, the first step in making a canoe.

"A lot of people think Aboriginal art is only dot painting," said Mick. "It is the most widely-recognised but it's symbolic of the Central and Western deserts. In Victoria and other parts of Australia, it's different; there isn't one form of Aboriginal art."

STORY SHERRI MCKERLEY



PHOTO: TRACEY PHILLIPS

Running for Damien



After an epic 563 kilometres, it was truly fitting that the 20 'Mildura to Melbourne' firefighters crossed the finish line together with family, friends and support people.

The run was jointly organised by CFA and MFB in memory of MFB firefighter Damien Burke who tragically passed away while on secondment at Mildura Fire Brigade.

The runners – 10 each from CFA and MFB – contributed an average of 28 kilometres to the relay-style event, taking it in turns to run stints of around five kilometres at a time.

Mildura Fire Brigade Senior Station Officer Mick Sporton and MFB's Steve Axup took on the impressive task of handling logistics.

"Damien brought the services so much closer together just through his way of working," said Mick, who worked closely with Damien on Mildura's D Shift Platoon.

"It was his approachability and his good nature. It didn't matter to him who you were or what level you were at, he had a way of making you feel like an equal. He treated you with respect."

Mick said the spirit of the event had been very much in keeping with Damien's legacy.

"The mateship, camaraderie and bonding across this event were really fabulous. I think the people involved will remember it for the rest of their lives," he said.

The run, which raised money for the Murdoch Children's Research Institute and more than \$10,000 for Lifeline, was held in conjunction with the Melbourne Firefighter Stair Climb. After participants finished the last leg, they put on full turnout gear and breathing apparatus, then climbed 28 flights of stairs.

"It was a massive team effort to complete the event," said Mick. "We had some tired, sore boys at the end."

STORY SONIA MACLEAN

MFB and CFA cricket day

CFA and MFB challenged each other to a day of cricket in late October as part of MFB's 125th anniversary year celebrations and to mark the end of Fire Action Week, Victoria's annual fire planning and preparation week.

Despite severe weather warnings being issued for the day, the wind and rain held off and past and present firefighters were given the opportunity to show off their cricketing prowess in two 20/20 cricket matches at Victoria Park, Kew. The first match (called the masters 20/20) featured former firefighters and the second was contested between current firefighters.

CFA Firefighter Emmett Bronca was pleased to see so many CFA members come together from across the state to take part in the event. "We'd like to thank each and every player who participated," Emmett said.

"Both the games were played in good spirits, and we all hope this can become an annual event for the two agencies."

The master's 20/20 match began at 11am, with MFB winning the toss and electing to bat. After scoring a respectable 6/119, CFA successfully chased down the score, with Warrnambool Fire Brigade's Murray Sutton making 46 runs and leading the team to a six-wicket victory. Best on field was awarded to Murray and MFB's Brett Bailey.

The showdown between current firefighters began at 2pm. CFA batted first and scored 9/91 from 20 overs, and then bowled out MFB for 82. Best on field for CFA went to Melton Fire Brigade's Noel Heafield, who top scored with 31 runs.

STORY JESS ESLER



PHOTO: BLAIR DELLEMIJN

District 27 exercise drills

In mid-October, the District 27 team conducted its annual pre-summer exercise, despite being initially disrupted by a smoke sighting in the hills north of Glengarry West.

There were two elements to the day's activities. The first was the exercising of the groups including the creation and deployment of strike teams and coordination of vehicle movements. This was managed from Moe South brigade's field operational vehicle (FOV).

Moe South brigade First Lieutenant Alan Sawyer, crew leader of the FOV, said it was great for newer crew members to get a sense of what an operational tempo feels like.

"There were a few IT issues with the FOV that we couldn't get help with on a Sunday," said Alan, "and we identified some issues with comms. But it was a great chance for people to work in roles they weren't experienced in and everyone pulled together when an issue came up and it got dealt with."



PHOTO: EMMA CONWAY

STORY EMMA CONWAY

The strike teams rotated through two drills. One was hosted by Australian Paper Maryvale, a major hazard facility and Australia's largest producer of paper products.

The scenario was a large gas bullet that needed to be cooled. This required crews to set up two tanker relays from different areas of the site because several closer hydrants were out of action for simulated maintenance.

Newborough brigade Second Lieutenant Andrew Phoenix was mentored as a strike team leader. He found it really useful to see how CFA worked with other organisations and to work with brigades from other groups.

"The tanker relay worked well but we didn't have enough adaptors to work between trucks with the new Stortz fitting and trucks that still had three thread," said Andrew. "It was a good problem-solving exercise and being mentored was a really good way to learn from others and gain experience."

The second drill run by crews from HVP Gippsland Plantations simulated a fire in the plantation requiring a mineral earth break. Out came the trusty rake-hoes. When the break was constructed, crews lay hose into the plantation to round up simulated spot fires.

Moe brigade Captain Rod Day was a strike team leader mentor who was glad to have external people generating the drills.

"Normally we [CFA] do our own drills but this time everyone just got involved with doing the drill. It was good to have other agencies because it meant we were able to focus on how we would normally work."

The second element of the exercise involved the district command centre (DCC) and the two local command facilities (LCFs).

Merton Group Officer Steve Barling was the exercise director. He and his team delivered timed events to the three command facilities to simulate fires being managed by district resources. These events were dealt with as though they were coming from the fireground, and processes and procedures were tested between the three facilities.

"The purpose of the exercise was to test the preparedness of the LCFs and DCC," said Steve, "and I think we achieved our objective. The day was a good test of our operators' knowledge and it highlighted some hardware/software issues in the new DCC. It also reinforced the roles and functions of the LCFs and DCC, and I hope we continue with this kind of training to further develop those skills."

District 27 Operations Manager Bill Johnstone was in the DCC for the exercise.

"As District 27 is new, it hasn't had time to evolve the way other long-established DCCs have, and the exercise uncovered the quirks you would expect in a new facility."

Bill noted that some minor issues were identified in relation to communications and operators' familiarity with the layout of the DCC. He was pleased that after all the work district staff had put into getting the DCC up and running, it was now just down to fine tuning.

"People were able to adapt. Problems were identified and solutions were found. The teamwork was outstanding," he said.

Bill closed the exercise by thanking everyone and praising the commitment of District 27 members. He encouraged everyone to look out for each other during the upcoming fire season and work together.

Successful multi-agency training day

PHOTOS: SALLY WHITE



As part of CFA's open day scheme, 22 brigades joined forces with SES, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) and Victoria Police at Camperdown Showgrounds in mid-October.

The event was initially planned as a small get together, before brigade community safety coordinators from Pomborneit and Stonyford brigades invited their seven immediate neighbours to a combined CFA open day. The feeling was that, by joining forces, nine small communities would have a better chance of attracting members of the public to the event. It was also seen as an opportunity for neighbouring brigades to spend time together, socialising away from a fireground.

Organisers then extended the invitation to more brigades in District 6 and 22 brigades from five groups attended. Despite the rain, more than 100 volunteers braved the weather to mobilise their trucks and carry out training.

The CFA volunteers went through their pre-season drills and are ready to turn out during the coming fire season. Brad Paton from Carpendeit brigade coordinated the drills with help from Bostocks Creek brigade Captain Lance Robilliard and catchment Brigade Administrative Support Officer Betty Robilliard.

The event was supported by SES units from Camperdown and Cobden, and DELWP and Victoria Police from Camperdown. With so many emergency responders coming together in a relaxed environment, there was a real opportunity for the different organisations to share stories and talk about the details of working together during an emergency.

"This was a great chance for us all to share local knowledge," said Senior Constable Tony McLachlan.

The SES units demonstrated their skills by tackling a simulated car accident in front of a large crowd. CFA volunteers were included in this demonstration.

Camperdown SES Unit Deputy Controller Rod Anson said the event was a great opportunity for CFA and SES volunteers to discuss the best ways to work together at road crashes. Most of the questions he answered were about airbags. "The weather hampered the number of demonstrations we could get through, but it was a good chance to show CFA volunteers what to look out for at different types of accidents," said Rod.

DELWP Community Partnership Officer George O'Dwyer brought along one of DELWP's new four-wheel-drive ultralight tankers, or 'G

Wagons', to show participants. These tankers have a falling object protection structure (FOPS) above the cabin to help protect crews from falling trees and branches.

The G Wagon "created a lot of conversation around its size, durability and flexibility as a forest vehicle," George said. "Everyone was especially impressed by the crew protection and safety aspects."

CFA's Senior Wildfire Instructor Mike Evans used a burn table to demonstrate fire behaviour to the crowd. With mock towns, critical infrastructure and homes, Mike talked through the procedure to manage a large fire, while drawing on the knowledge and experience of people in the audience.

Fire Safety Officer and Regional Property Advice Services (PAVS) Coordinator Phil O'Keefe brought the PAVS trailer from Hamilton to demonstrate how to prepare your property for the coming season.

District 6 Acting Operations Manager Mark Gunning said, "the opportunity for a large number of brigades to come together in a pre-season learning environment was invaluable."

"It was good to see everyone engaged."

STORY SALLY WHITE

Let's Talk in the south-west

Sam Fitzgibbon was a member of Ellerslie Fire Brigade alongside his dad Michael. At 21 years of age, Sam was a farmer with a firm handshake and a smile who always had time for a chat. He had a loving family and a network of friends and was a proud and perfectionist young man.

Sam took his life in March this year, writing a letter to his family and friends telling them how much he loved them, how he loved the farm but how his mental health struggle meant that, right or wrong, he had to leave them.

This leaves Sam's family and friends with a lifetime of heartbreak. Why couldn't Sam tell any of them how he was feeling? They would have done anything to help him. If only he had accepted that anxiety/depression was an illness that can be treated.

A total of 3,027 Australians committed suicide last year – twice the national road toll. The greatest risk groups are men between the ages of 16-25, 34-43 and over 84.

Sam's parents Michael and Jane Fitzgibbon want to do all they can to ensure no other family has to go through the same heartbreak.

'Let's Talk' is a program that Michael, Jane and Warrnambool's St John of God Hospital Mental Health Counselling Centre have initiated and are presenting at local schools and sporting clubs. It aims to reduce the stigma of mental illness and encourages early intervention.

'Let's Talk' is also an acronym, spelling out some of its key points:

- L** = learn self-care
- E** = express your feelings
- T** = tell someone
- S** = someone loves you
- T** = talk
- A** = ask how you're feeling
- L** = listen
- K** = keep talking

"The community needs to own this issue and show care," said Jane. "No one should be suffering in isolation. It's OK to tell someone that you're sad, you're lonely and not finding enjoyment in the usual things.

"Don't make the mistake of thinking that things aren't going to get better.

"One in five people will have a mental health crisis in their lifetime. It needs to become normal for people in families and communities to talk honestly about how they are. It has to become more socially acceptable to say you're not feeling OK and ask for help."

Mobile phones, Facebook, Twitter. We can lose sight of the fact that the most compelling World Wide Web is the web of relationships that connects us to others and where each person is irreplaceable.

"Only three per cent of our interactions are face to face," continued Jane. "With social media, you can go for a whole day and you haven't talked to anyone and that's especially true of our young people.

"Once you have an awareness of yourself and others, you have a responsibility. Reach out, connect, seek help and understand that help is different for everyone."



COMMUNITY GATHERING

With the backing of Sam's family and not long after his death, a community gathering was arranged at a local golf club. Close to 200 people attended, arriving early and staying late, including representatives of all Mortlake Group brigades and neighbouring groups.

"We need to get off the farm and really be aware of what's going on in the community," said dairy farmer and Ellerslie Fire Brigade Captain Merrilyn McCosh.

"The brigade paid for finger food and

drinks and we had three CFA peers there. I really just asked people to talk to each other. We all have our mobile phones, so call people up and really talk to them."

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE THE ONE APPROACHED

Warrnambool St John of God Hospital's Mental Health Manager John Parkinson is working with Michael and Jane on the 'Let's Talk' initiative. He knows the anguish of those left behind after suicide.

"Health services alone can't provide all the necessary help for all those seeking it," said John. "It's up to the community to take responsibility and open the conversation.

"We live through times when other people care more for us than we care for ourselves so sometimes we need to trust others more than we trust ourselves.

"Someone who's depressed might be telling themselves 'I'm inadequate' and have feelings of guilt and shame."

Left: Ellerslie Fire Brigade Captain Merrilyn McCosh

PHOTO: LEITH HILLARD

"Don't make the mistake of thinking that things aren't going to get better"

Jane Fitzgibbon

John firmly believes that people of goodwill with common sense are unlikely to say the 'wrong' thing to a loved one who reveals that they're not coping.

"If you sense that a family member, friend or someone in your peer group is a little different, pick a moment when you're alone together and say with sincerity and genuine concern, 'I've noticed you're a little quieter lately. Is everything OK?'," said John.

"What's most important is to instil hope that it isn't forever. Let them know that what they're experiencing is treatable and you can and will help them find assistance.

"Conversations that convey true empathy can start to remove the stigma around mental illness. Understand that everything is a topic of conversation."

John believes the key to good mental health is having a balanced life, engaging in activities you find meaningful and staying connected with the people you love and feel loved by.

"Stresses are a part of our lives so it's important to have productive ways of dealing with them," he said. "It's so important to step away from the busyness of our lives and participate in pleasurable activities or even do nothing for a while and give our brain a rest."

STORY LEITH HILLARD

GETTING HELP

If you or someone you know needs help, contact **Lifeline** on **13 11 14** or **Headspace** on **1800 650 890**.

If you are in an emergency situation or at immediate risk of harm, contact emergency services on Triple Zero.

CFA Welfare Support Services

Member Assistance Program: **1300 795 711** (24 hours)

Peer Support Program: contact your local peer coordinator

Chaplaincy Program: **1800 337 068** (24 hours)

HeadsUP online resources: cfa.vic.gov.au/headsup

Suicide prevention

Beyondblue provides information and support to help all of us maintain our mental health. The organisation highlights the following signs that may indicate someone is at risk of suicide. This risk is greater if a behaviour is new or has increased.

Physical

- Excessive or disturbed sleep
- Increased or loss of appetite
- Signs of self-harm

Behaviour

- Withdrawn and isolated
- Inability to make decisions, irritable, agitated
- Risk-taking behaviours that are out of character
- Personal care and hygiene changes
- Increased alcohol or illicit substance use
- Relationship breakdown
- Changes in mood
- Finalising affairs, completing wills and clearing debts, giving away personal effects

Feelings

- Irritable or anxious
- Sad or empty
- Disconnected
- Hopeless or helpless
- A sudden change from feeling sad and empty to having a sense of calm

Conversations

- Preoccupation with talking about death and morbid subjects
- Topics centre around guilt, escape, loneliness or helplessness
- Believing there is no future
- Saying goodbyes

If you are concerned about someone, have the conversation

- Create an opportunity to talk in private to show genuine care and concern
- Be curious about their thoughts and feelings
- Instil hope
- Be sincere and express that you are open to talking when they're ready
- Suggest talking to a counsellor, doctor, Lifeline, beyondblue or someone else
- Recognise that they may lack motivation to seek help so support them as they make the call or attend appointments.



Through the ages – Monbulk



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.

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

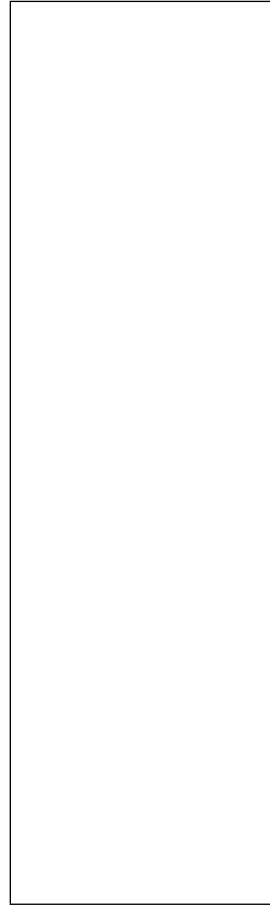
To get a Memberlink card, phone 1800 820 037 or register online at emergencymemberlink.com.au.

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

- 20% off all food, beverages and retail items at any **Zambreno** Mexican Restaurants across Victoria..
- No application fee for home and personal loans with the **Firefighters Credit Union** plus a contribution of up to \$1,000 towards Credit Union's legal fees on the settlement of a home loan.
- No joining fee and 10% off membership at **Snap Fitness**.
- 20% off a return family ticket on **The Bellarine Railway** between Queenscliff/Lakers Siding or Queenscliff/Drysdale.
- Discounted rates and reduced insurance excess with **AVIS**.
- One complimentary dinner and show ticket when another dinner and show ticket of equal or greater price is purchased at **The Comic's Lounge**.
- Discounts on a range of pre-purchased **Gift Cards** including Woolworths, Coles, Myer, Kmart, Target, Supercheap Auto, Rebel Sport, JB Hi-Fi, Ray's Outdoors and BCF.
- **Choice Hotels Australasia** offers government rates at more than 270 Ascend Hotel Collection, Econo Lodge, Comfort, Quality and Clarion hotels.
- Exclusive discounts and offers through the **JB Hi-Fi Family & Friends Program**.
- 10% discount on **Electrodry Carpet Dry Cleaning Services**.
- Commercial pricing through **Good Guys Commercial Division**.
- Save 40% on **AIG Travel Insurance**.
- One complimentary admission when a second of equal or greater value is purchased at **Ashcombe Maze & Lavender Gardens**.
- 5% discount on passenger fares with **Spirit of Tasmania**.
- 10% discount at **The Athlete's Foot** on presentation of your Memberlink card.
- **Mantra Group Departure Lounge** offers up to 50% discount on accommodation at Peppers, Mantra and BreakFree properties.
- Free medium soft drink, medium orange juice, standard Espresso Pronto or small McCafe Coffee when you spend over \$3 at any **McDonald's** restaurants in Victoria.
- 10% off **Sovereign Hill** day entry for members and their immediate families.
- **Thrifty** offers exclusive rental rates and a reduced liability fee on all cars, trucks, buses and 4WDs.
- **Searoad Ferries** offers 10% discount on ferry travel between Sorrento and Queenscliff.
- 10% off all items in store or online from **The Farm Store**.
- Save between 10% and 40% off the best available rates at 45 **Wyndham Hotels and Resorts** in Australia, New Zealand, New Caledonia and South East Asia.
- Get \$50 off your next booking when you spend over \$1,500 at **Flight Centre**.
- 20% discount at **Goodyear Airport Parking** at Tullamarine when booked online.
- 10% off your next manufacturer's handbook service at **UltraTune Auto Service Centres**.
- Save money on pre-purchased **movie tickets, theme park and attraction** tickets.
- Trade prices on audio visual, whitegoods, kitchen and home appliances through **Harvey Norman Groups & Associations Division**.
- Buy plants and garden products at wholesale prices from **Plantmark**.
- Corporate pricing on **Rex Gorell Family Group's** range of new vehicles.

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