



PROTECTING LIVES AND PROPERTY | SUMMER 2011

BRIGADE



GETTING READY TRAINING RAMPS UP FOR FIRE SEASON

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KERRY MURPHY CHAIRMAN

At the October Board meeting, the Chief Officer reported on the conditions that indicate an above-average grassfire risk this fire season. One hot, windy day in October produced almost 60 grass and scrub fires alone.

Community messaging, operational briefings and strategic planning are being influenced by this forecast. An example is the deployment of a secure medium tactical helicopter and a fixed wing aircraft to the Mallee for the first time, to help mitigate the fire risk during harvesting.

Updated Township Protection Plans with key community information were mailed to more than 140 high-risk communities in November.

Chief Executive Officer Mick Bourke updated the Board on the coordinated work arising from the recommendations of the Jones inquiry into arrangements for volunteers as overseen by Lex de Man, Executive Manager of Operational Training and Volunteerism.

It's full steam ahead for fleet services. The Board was informed that the crew protection retrofit program is running ahead of schedule; tender evaluation is underway for 74 medium tankers, and technical and operator sign-off has been obtained for three mobile field training units.

The bunker boot program has now sized and distributed approximately 4,000 pairs of boots to eligible members. It's expected that the roll-out will be completed by June 2012.

In the last round of firefighter recruitment, we received 749 applications including an encouraging number of applications from CFA volunteers.

CFA is working with the Department of Sustainability and Environment on a shared leadership and management professional development framework for incident management teams. Consideration is being given to the Fireline Leadership and Incident Leadership courses jointly conducted by both agencies being integrated into this framework.

It's a busy time for all members on the front line. The Board was informed of the brigades and groups across the State preparing for the fire season with desktop exercises and out in the field, along with pre-fire season briefings. Many members travel long distances to attend these exercises and enjoy the fellowship of their group.

Some 430 brigades participated in CFA Sunday on 20 November. Thank you for volunteering your time, energy and local knowledge. It's an ideal opportunity to talk to your communities about fire safety and also enjoy a neighbourly conversation over a barbecued sausage at your fire station. ■

NEW HONOURS AND AWARDS

CFA is introducing a new suite of honours and awards for members. In 2009, CFA's Board called for a sweeping reassessment of the process, procedures and types of awards and honours best suited to CFA members.

A review committee looked closely at the system and proposed a number of changes including enhancing some awards, discontinuing others and formalising the hierarchy of awards available to members.

The existing and proposed awards have now been packaged into identifiable streams. New awards and enhancements include insignia to complement commendations and 'unit citations' for courage, a medal set for outstanding service, and a scroll for special recognition to brigades.

Executive Manager of Operational Training and Volunteerism Lex de Man said it's about 10 years since CFA reviewed its honours and awards and the timing was right to streamline and improve the process. "A range of matters were reviewed including the criteria for awards and the design of awards, medals and ribbons.

"There will be some tangible changes that I think CFA members will appreciate. This includes replacing the Outstanding Service Badge with an Outstanding Service Medal," said Lex.

CFA is preparing photos of the individual awards plus a hierarchy of the awards. "This will make it much easier for CFA members to determine which of the awards are the most appropriate for each individual situation," Lex added. ■

MACCA'S FIRE MESSAGE

During November, if you ate at any of Victoria's McDonald's restaurants, you will have seen a familiar face staring back at you from your tray mat.

CFA's Fire Safe Kids character, Captain Koala, starred on a specially created tray mat designed to promote summer fire safety messages and encourage people to be 'fire ready' when around their home and while on holiday.

The FireReady tray mat was produced in collaboration with Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board (MFB), Department of Sustainability and Environment, the Fire Services Commissioner and Department of Justice. ■

Is your family Fire Ready?

Victoria is one of the most bushfire prone areas in the world.
Planning ahead can save you and your family from being caught in a fire.

For information visit cfa.vic.gov.au or call the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 637.

Did you know your family needs a Bushfire Survival Plan if you:

- Go on day trips or go camping in the summer holidays
- Live close to parks, in the bush or forest, on the coast or in a grassy area
- Drive through the bush when you leave home
- Have had a fire close to where you live

PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE.
FireReady

McDonald's



Historic EMR TRIAL

CFA firefighters at Cranbourne, Dandenong, Hallam and Springvale integrated brigades began a 12-month emergency medical response (EMR) trial in September after upgrading their lifesaving first-aid skills.

Ambulance Victoria gave an eight-day intensive first-aid training course that allows those accredited firefighters to respond to life threatening 'priority 0' calls while an ambulance is en route. These include cardiac arrest and any incident where a person is unconscious and not breathing.

CFA held an initial EMR trial, which is ongoing, in 2008 at Berwick, Mornington, Edithvale, Whittlesea and South Morang.

As part of the 12-month trial, volunteer firefighters from the four integrated stations will also be given the opportunity to undertake this lifesaving training and respond as they do for other emergencies.

All nine brigades now carry a first-aid kit, oxygen kit, cervical collars and a defibrillator on their vehicles, to be used by firefighters who've completed the course.

Southern Metropolitan Operations Manager Trevor Owen said that providing this additional service will add further value to the important role CFA plays in the community.

"CFA firefighters hold a great responsibility – to protect lives and property – and supporting Ambulance Victoria with this capability will enhance our service to the community," said Trevor.

"If you call for an ambulance and a fire truck turns up, don't be surprised or think there's a mistake. We can start treatment straight away and that might be the difference between life and death."

Ambulance Victoria EMR Coordinator Lindsay O'Brien said the earlier cardiac arrest patients can be defibrillated, the more likely there will be a positive outcome. ■

Above: Dandenong brigade members learn lifesaving skills

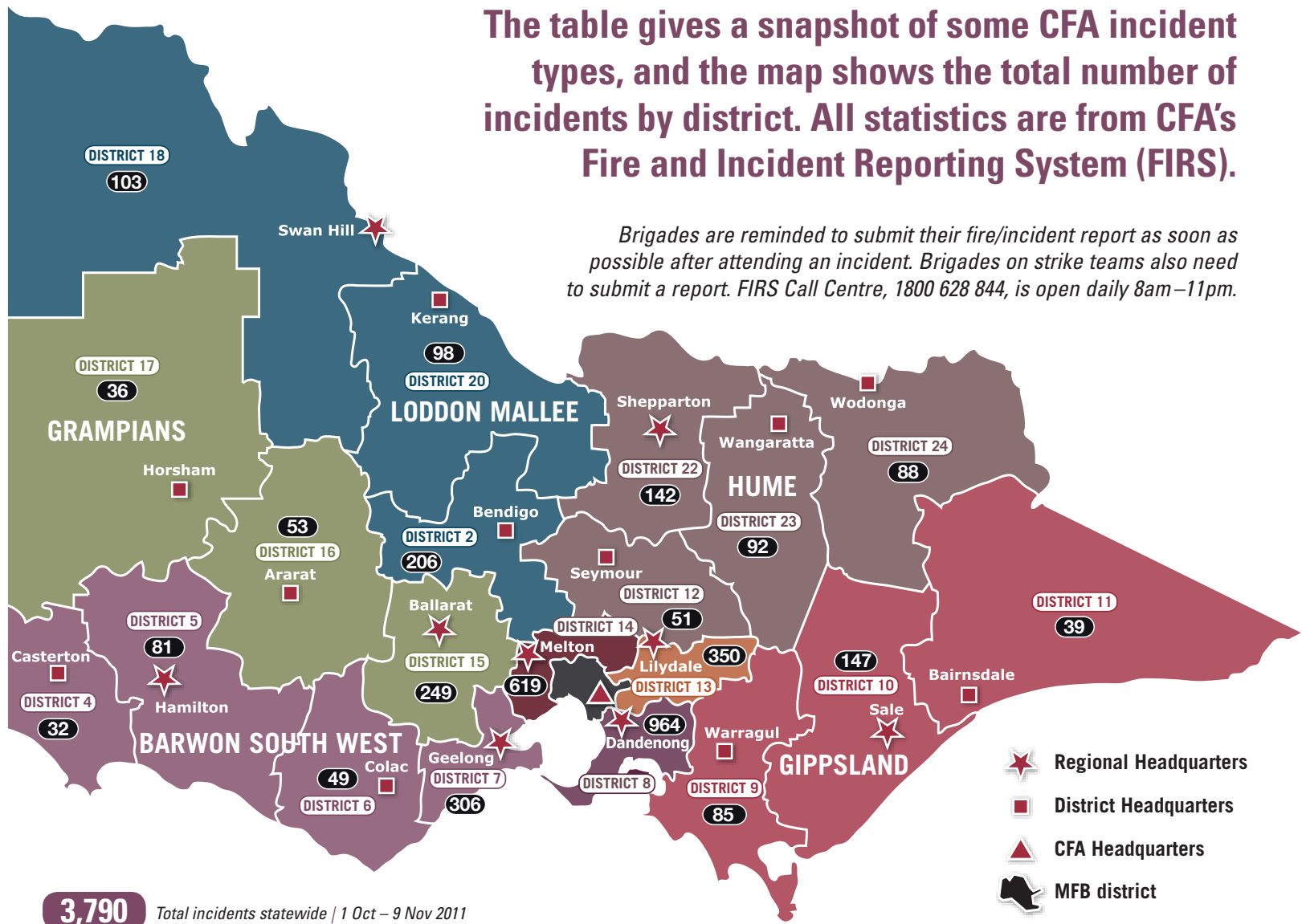
THE LATEST INCIDENT STATISTICS

INCIDENT TYPE	1 OCTOBER – 9 NOVEMBER 2011			1 JULY – 30 SEPT 2011		
	Est. loss	Est. ha burnt	No. of incidents	Est. loss	Est. ha burnt	No. of incidents
Bush and forest		15	5		25	7 ^a
Car fires and MVA			511			1,223
False alarms			646			1,473
Grass fires		76	19		62	24 ^b
Hazardous materials			225			533
House fires	\$5,265,320		112	\$13,445,274		340
Industrial fires	\$2,857,400		26	\$2,763,500		50
	\$8,122,720	91	1,544	\$16,208,774	87	3,650

^aForest and bushfires and scrub or bush and grass mixture fires larger than one hectare; ^bLarger than one hectare

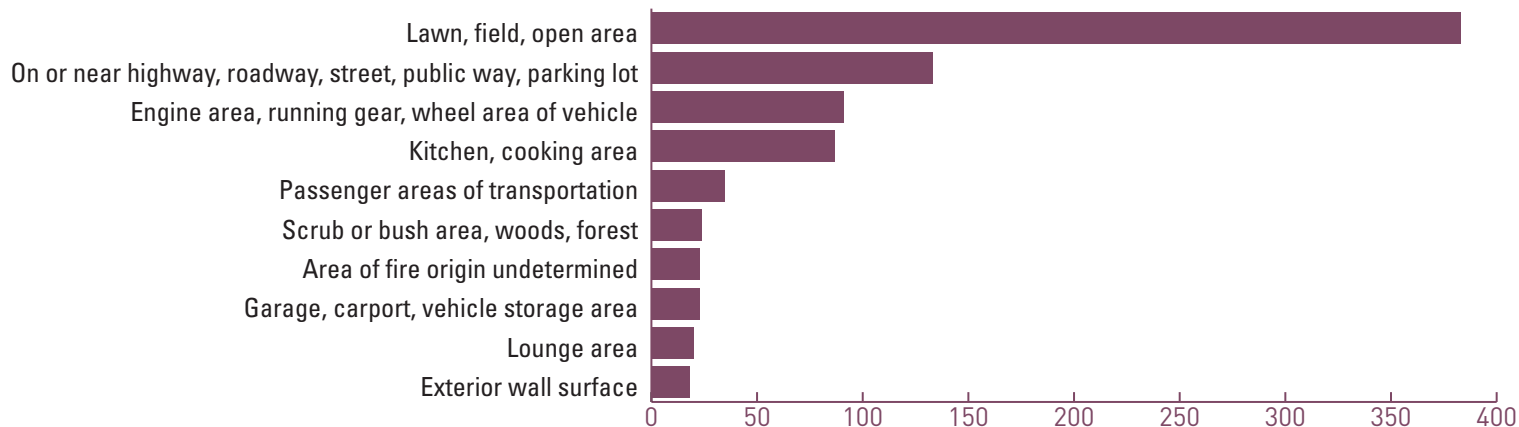
The table gives a snapshot of some CFA incident types, and the map shows the total number of incidents by district. All statistics are from CFA's Fire and Incident Reporting System (FIRS).

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.



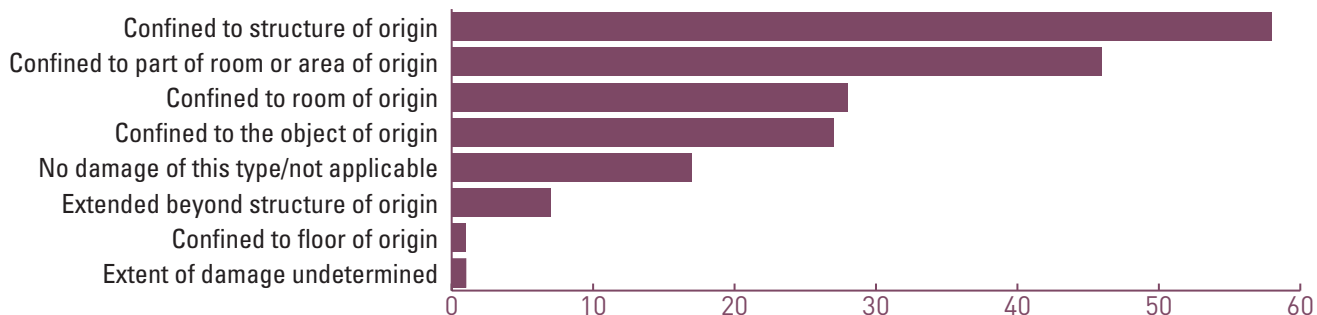
ORIGIN OF FIRE

1 OCT – 9 NOV 2011



EXTENT OF FLAME DAMAGE

1 OCT – 9 NOV 2011



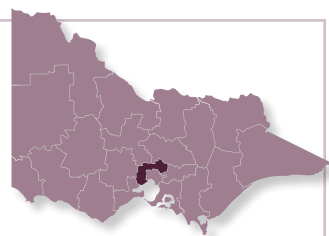
FOUR BOATSHEDS LOST

INCIDENT: Structure fire

DISTRICT: 14

DATE: 22 August 2011

BRIGADES: Point Cook, Hoppers Crossing, Werribee, Truganina



MARTIN ANDERSON

Firefighters managed to save two boatsheds after a fire broke out in the Campbells Cove area of Werribee South in the evening.

Crews from Point Cook, Hoppers Crossing, Werribee and Truganina had to ferry water to the scene from a nearby dam because there was no mains water available. The Incident Controller was Station Officer Darren Miller from Point Cook.

Four boatsheds were destroyed but firefighters managed to bring the fire under control before the last two in the tightly-packed row of six were damaged.

The fire was reported just before 8pm and the last crews left the scene after midnight. Ambulance Victoria paramedics were at the scene to monitor firefighters working in breathing apparatus.

As a precaution, the firefighters' gear was bagged and sent for testing for asbestos contamination. ■

Strong wind FANS FLAMES



GLENN JOHNS



KEITH PAKENHAM

INCIDENT: Structure fire
DISTRICT: 13
DATE: 19 September 2011
BRIGADES: Bayswater, Belgrave, Belgrave South, Ferntree Gully, Upper Ferntree Gully, Upwey, Bayswater BA

14 fire vehicles at the scene. To give an idea of the work performed, Bayswater breathing apparatus van refilled 38 cylinders on site.

For some crew members it was the first time they'd worn the new personal protective clothing on a hot, dry windy day to a fully involved structure fire. It was critical for us to stop, hydrate and rest.

We were lucky to have an excellent water supply in the area or the outcome could have been much worse. Using our brigade's new thermal imaging camera meant we could monitor hotspots with great accuracy.

Additional crews from Belgrave South and Ferntree Gully also arrived to assist with the task at hand.

All the brigades and crews worked really well together with so many other services – Police, Ambulance Victoria, gas and electricity companies, Council Welfare Group, and CFA fire investigators were all part of the team.

The Dandenong Ranges Group and Upwey auxiliary members supplied food to crews at the scene. Our last unit, the pumper, didn't return to the station until 6.30pm.

Local resident and professional photographer Glenn Johns heard the siren, rushed to the scene and captured the blaze at its height.

"I've been to many fires and I've never seen a house so involved. It was unreal. The house was destroyed in 15 minutes," Glenn said. ■

STORY PAUL MATHER AND KEITH PAKENHAM

Late morning on the first day of my annual leave I heard the crackling of fire and the breaking of glass. As I looked out across neighbouring properties from my rear deck I saw the fire and smoke billowing through the tall trees of the valley.

I jumped into my car and headed to the Upwey fire station and drove past the house that was already consumed by fire, with flames leaping from windows and lapping the surrounding trees.

As a lieutenant with Upwey brigade and knowing what we were about to face, I arrived in our pumper with a full crew of six on board, ready with strategies in mind. After a quick size-up, a neighbour had told me everyone was out and they had rescued the family's dog.

Our effort then focused on the fire that was impinging on exposures nearby. A house on the western side was already suffering severe flame contact to its side and roof. Inside was a paramedic having a sleep after doing a night shift and he awoke with his son to smoke alarms instead of an alarm clock.

When Upper Ferntree Gully and Belgrave pumpers arrived, I sectorised the incident and got crews to protect all the adjoining properties to minimise the spread of fire. The property to the rear was divided by deciduous trees and that helped to slow the impact of fire to them.

Adjoining properties were hit with serious ember attack as the wind changed direction and ferocity several times. The embers caused a fire in a wood pile on a deck of the rear house and burned holes in polycarbonate roofing on several houses.

It was the most intense structure fire I have been in charge of and there was so much to be aware of. At the peak of the firefight we had 50 firefighters and



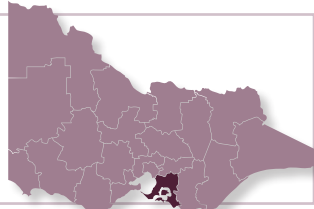
GLENN JOHNS



KEITH PAKENHAM

Dandy HORSE RESCUE

INCIDENT: Bangholme rescue
DISTRICT: 8
DATE: 10 September 2011
BRIGADES: Dandenong, Knox SES



Crews initially tried to haul the horse up the bank with straps but the horse's weight and the steepness of the bank impeded the rescue. Crews then shovelled the edge away to get better access, but Gryphon was too exhausted to get out.

After several calls it was discovered that Knox SES had a harness that could be used for an animal in this type of predicament. Several firefighters with equine experience kept Gryphon soothed as she lay on the embankment.

When the backhoe was in position the crews from Knox SES fitted the harness. The water was pretty cold for the couple of members who braved the mud and fitted the gear.

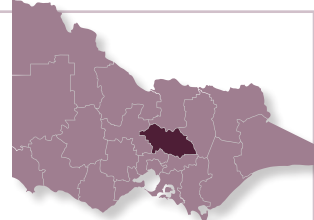
Very slowly the horse was lifted clear of the drain and was placed on firm ground. With a shake of the main, Gryphon bolted away to be groomed and looked after by owner Donna Aitken, almost three hours after the rescue began. ■

This was a rescue call with a difference for Dandenong brigade, when it was called to a horse stuck in a drain in a paddock off Perry Road, Bangholme. Incident Controller and Senior Station Officer Darren Padgett had to plan a strategy to get gear into an area of paddocks that were fairly soft underfoot. He requested a backhoe from the Greater Dandenong City Council, which was used to lift the stranded horse (named Gryphon) from the water.

BUXTON'S BA PAYS OFF

STORY MARK SOMERS

INCIDENT: Structure fire
DISTRICT: 12
DATE: 13 August 2011
BRIGADES: Buxton, Bayswater BA, Alexandra, Marysville, Taggerty, Eildon



declared under control because of problems accessing the base of the fire.

Due to the swift response by everyone involved, the fire was limited to the two upstairs rooms and the majority of the home was saved.

The Buxton breathing apparatus had its first use at a ski shop fire in Narbethong. It also proved the value of getting to the seat of a fire quickly before it has a chance to establish itself.

The ability to safely gain access to the fire inside the building rather than squirting lots of water from the outside made a big difference. Previously we couldn't enter burning buildings because of toxic gas and smoke, but the new equipment has changed that.

Buxton brigade members have undergone extra training to use the new equipment and it's definitely been worth their effort. ■

For the second time in as many months, Buxton brigade's newly-acquired breathing apparatus (BA) has proven its worth. The brigade was called to a house in Buxton Rise around midnight and found the top storey of the home well alight.

The owner and a neighbour, Shannon Frith, who's also a volunteer with Buxton brigade, fought the fire using a garden hose until crews arrived. Their actions slowed the spread of fire.

The internal firefight was carried out by Captain Mark Somers and Second Lieutenant Graham Eddy. The fire took around half an hour before it was



ALEX CAUGHNEY

MELTDOWN ON THE MIDLAND

STORY **JESSE MERCIECA**

INCIDENT: Structure fire
DISTRICT: 22
DATE: 16 September 2011
BRIGADES: Shepparton, Tatura, Mooroopna, North West Mooroopna



It was a busy morning on Midland Highway as nine trucks from four brigades were called to battle a house fire. When the crews arrived at the fire in a farmhouse at Mooroopna, one tanker had to relay water to the other trucks from a local channel, as water was unavailable using conventional means. Registered Duty Officer John Smith said: "Where the fire was, there is no reticulation. They had to pump out of the nearby channel, starting with tankers connected to the other trucks".

The operation was intricate, with the brigades having to use teamwork and effective communication to get the job done smoothly. Police were needed at the scene for traffic control as the fire hose linking the tanker to the other trucks ran across the road. The owner of the property has his job to thank for saving his life. "The occupier of the home was out early in the morning as a truck driver," said Duty Officer Peter Bell of Shepparton brigade. The owner was lucky that morning because he left early, but the firefighters must have passed a black cat on their way to the incident. "The truck [that was pumping water] dipped in a table drain," explained Peter. To add to the already chaotic nature of the incident, it came to the crews' attention that there was asbestos in the house. "The outside had a brick cladding which contained asbestos," Peter continued. "The pipes inside also had asbestos." "All firefighters had breathing apparatus, so there were no dangers there," he added. The fire took about 45 minutes to control and the farmhouse was almost completely destroyed. ■

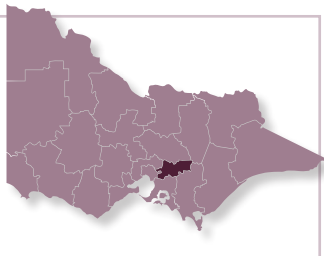


DAVID ALGIE

HISTORIC HOMESTEAD BURNS

STORY **PAUL HUNTINGTON**

INCIDENT: Structure fire
DISTRICT: 13
DATE: 30 September 2011
BRIGADES: Monbulk, Emerald, Macclesfield, Bayswater BA



Macclesfield brigade was called to a house fire just before 2am. The house is one of the original homesteads and is believed to be more than 120 years old. The single-storey home, in 130 acres of bushland, was formally owned by the Watsons, one of the original families that settled in Macclesfield.

The house was fully involved by the time crews arrived and despite the intense and concerted effort by more than 30 firefighters from three brigades, the house couldn't be saved. Water was a key issue for the Officer in Charge, Macclesfield Captain Sharon Merritt. She set up a relay of three tankers feeding Emerald pumper to bring water from the nearest hydrant almost a kilometre away. Fortunately, a reliable water supply was quickly established. Four teams wearing breathing apparatus initially conducted an external attack to knock down the fire, and could conduct only a limited internal attack because the old timber floor was collapsing in places. Falling roof structure also made the job risky. Two firefighters suffered minor injuries at the blaze. The house had asbestos cladding, so all crews working on or near the house participated in the asbestos decontamination operation. ■

Tyabb TANKER TURMOIL

INCIDENT: Road accident

DISTRICT: 8

DATE: 22 October 2011

BRIGADES: Langwarrin, Pearcedale, Hastings, Baxter, Bittern, Somerville, Frankston, Balnarring, Tyabb, Moorooduc



At around midnight, a semi-trailer hauling a fully laden fuel tanker rolled over at a roundabout in Tyabb.

A call was quickly made for four tankers, two pumpers and quantities of class B foam. After Tyabb Captain John Morris reported it as a hazmat incident not yet under control, Dandenong Rapid Deployment Module set off to the scene with large drums and carboys of foam. The Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board (MFB) arrived with a foam transport pod.

Crews worked quickly to build a bunding around the drains along the roadway to minimise spillage, and a blanket of foam was laid over the spilled fuel and the tanker.

Police blocked all roads around the area, and sand was brought in by VicRoads to help dam the drains to prevent the contaminant from reaching Westernport Bay.

A relay of tankers supplied water from nearby water points to enable foam production.

When daylight came and decanting was complete, cranes lifted the tanker and truck upright. ■



KEITH PAKENHAM

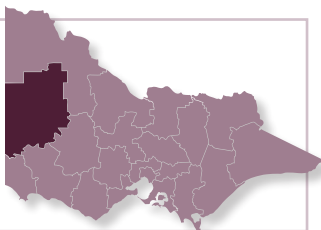
DINYARRAK ATTACKS HAYSHED

INCIDENT: Structure fire

DISTRICT: 17

DATE: 6 September 2011

BRIGADES: Dinyarrak, Kaniva, Leeor, South Lillimur



In the early hours, a farmer woke up and saw a glow from his hayshed several hundred metres from the house. Dinyarrak brigade turned out, closely followed by three other brigades. Two days later the brigade, which is based on the property, was still on alert as the hay continued to smoulder.

"The issue was that it was a hay and machinery shed," said Operations Officer Trevor Ebbels. "If it was just a hayshed, they'd be taking the hay bales out, starting with the least damaged part of the stack, and pulling them apart. When the bales are still together, it's difficult for the water to penetrate. Not enough oxygen gets into them so they smoulder and retain heat."

The challenge for the brigade was to manage a hay fire in a shed where the farmer had suffered devastating machinery loss, including one prime mover and trailer, two large tractors and a backhoe tractor. ■

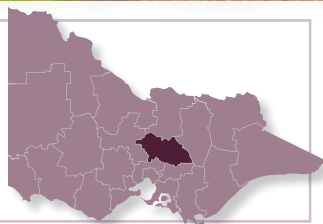


CHRIS ROSEWALL



GOLFERS' IRONS IN THE FIRE

INCIDENT: Structure fire
DISTRICT: 12
DATE: 23 September 2011
BRIGADES: Seymour Avenel, Hilldene, Tallarook, Whiteheads Creek—Tarcombe



A fire at the Seymour Golf Club completely destroyed the clubhouse. Firefighters were called to the blaze just after 2pm and by 3pm the structure was well alight. Investigators said the fire originated in the roof space above the kitchen/lounge area. The occupants, who were in the kitchen at the time, saw the flames through a hole in the wall where there was an exhaust fan.

Operations Officer John Smith said the roof of the building collapsed over the central kitchen, restaurant and lounge.

“Because the building was structurally unsound, it was a difficult fire to contain. The firefighters had to fight the fire from the outside of the clubhouse,” said John.

“This fire was a multi-brigade effort and it was great to see the strong support from the five brigades.”

“Most of these firefighters had to leave work in the middle of the day and wouldn’t have had time to return which is a big ask for a lot of employers and companies, so this really was a great community effort in every way.”

The fire was under control by 3.30pm but CFA crews remained at the scene until around 6pm.

The two people in the clubhouse escaped unharmed. ■

WONTHAGGI HOUSE FIRE

INCIDENT: Structure fire
DISTRICT: 8
DATE: 22 August 2011
BRIGADES: Wonthaggi, Inverloch, Kilcunda, Dalyston



Wonthaggi brigade was paged at 8.30am about a house fire, and Dalyston and Inverloch were paged for support. When Captain Kim O’Connor arrived at the scene, he requested a further tanker from Kilcunda because there was no mains water supply in the area.

Members donned breathing apparatus and started an external attack as the house was fully involved. It was confirmed that the house was unoccupied at the time.

The job became very difficult because the access driveway was blocked by piles of rock, and the pump crew had to run four lengths of hose to achieve the best results.

When the additional tankers arrived along with Inverloch’s pumper, they started a pump relay so there were no delays in delivering water to the fire.

Fire investigators determined that an electrical fault started the blaze. ■





DAVID ALGIE

MUD AND SNAKES HINDER RESCUE

INCIDENT: Aircraft accident

DISTRICT: 8

DATE: 8 October 2011

BRIGADES: Tooradin, Koo Wee Rup, Cranbourne, Nar Nar Goon



After a fair amount of running around, the plane was finally located in Moody's Inlet stuck in mud and water after clipping mangrove trees. It was almost a kilometre away from the South Gippsland Highway and around 500 metres from the airfield runway.

As the tide receded, the solid ground became even further away from the plane and its occupants.

At the crash site, CFA and SES rescue crews worked together with paramedics and the police to recover the occupants, while being waist deep in mud, water and spilled aviation fuel.

A staging area was set up along the highway so that rescuers and Ambulance Victoria could treat patients and rescuers as they emerged. Several patients were airlifted from the crash site by police and Air Ambulance helicopters, and taken straight to Tooradin Airfield where a triage medical team was waiting.

To remove the huge quantities of mud and aviation fuel, rescuers were hosed down and decontaminated before being assessed by paramedics. ■

On Saturday afternoon there was a report of a plane crash near Tooradin airfield. Air traffic controllers confirmed they had lost contact with a plane used for skydiving. On board were the pilot, four passengers and an aerial photographer.

Tooradin and Koo Wee Rup brigades responded, along with rescue crews from Nar Nar Goon and Pakenham SES.

"Crews attempted to head in through the scrub but had to contend with quite a few tiger snakes along the way," said Incident Controller Captain David Bulman from Tooradin brigade.

TRENDY FLATS DESTROYED

INCIDENT: Structure fire

DISTRICT: 8

DATE: 23 October 2011

BRIGADES: Mornington, Frankston, Mt Eliza, Mt Martha, Patterson River



attacked mainly from the outside because the first floor was well alight and hard to access.

Elderly residents of the adjoining old convent were evacuated on to the street and assessed by paramedics for smoke inhalation. Neighbours were soon busy bringing them blankets and hot drinks as they watched the action.

After Frankston's teleboom was set up outside the front fence, it quickly hit the roofline while ground crews worked on the lower and upper floors. Frankston breathing apparatus van refilled cylinders and Mt Martha provided lighting around the site. ■



KEITH PAKENHAM

It was a very early start on a Sunday for brigades called to a fire in Mornington. As they approached, flames were visible through the roof of the two-storey building.

Incident Controller, Senior Station Officer Tony Hunt, requested three pumpers and a teleboom when he arrived at the scene and saw the job ahead.

The former St Macartan's Primary School on Tanti Avenue was nearing completion as a block of trendy apartments when the fire broke out. The fire was



MICK BOURKE CEO

ROADMAP TO OUR MISSION

The Board and Senior Leadership Team have worked together to develop a new strategy – a means of describing our future and giving people a clear and shared sense of direction.

This involves reviewing what's most important for the organisation and the communities we protect, and assessing the business challenges, strategic priorities and key success factors for CFA.

Importantly, the Senior Leadership Team has also been considering how we best provide focus and clarity for our people – developing a strategy that enables us to better align what we do and share responsibility for our overall success as One CFA.

The focus of the strategy is how we achieve our mission – through prevention and preparedness, response and recovery – and building a modern and sustainable organisation.

CFA is a volunteer and community based fire and emergency service whose mission is to protect lives and property.

What will this look like? Over the coming years we will focus on and invest in:

- minimising the incidence and impact of fire and other emergencies;
- volunteers who are supported and recognised in decision-making;
- demonstrating leadership and decision-making (command and control) prior to and during fire and other emergencies;
- ensuring our brigades have the required capability and capacity;

- putting the safety and wellbeing of our people first;
- understanding our stakeholders' needs and help them understand ours;
- building a modern organisation that respects and values its volunteers, career members and stakeholders;
- planning and resourcing current and future needs; and
- continually improving what we do.

These changes present a number of opportunities and challenges for CFA. Our future growth and success will be influenced by our response to these changes – through our leadership, strategy, structure and culture.

An important part of developing our strategy is determining what external influences are important for us to respond to as an organisation. For example, recommendations and reviews from the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, Fire Services Commissioner's three-year fire services reform program, the Government's Green Paper on Emergency Management, and the Report of Inquiry into the Effect of Arrangements made by the CFA on its Volunteers by His Honour Judge Jones.

Underpinning delivery and achievement of CFA strategy is our values – respect, commitment, flexibility, attentiveness, compassion, clarity, integrity and determination. These values shape the behaviours you, your colleagues, our community and stakeholders experience.

Our success relies on us working together in teams, driving our delivery and support services and demonstrating our values as One CFA. ■

PROJECT 2016 BOOSTS URBAN BRIGADES

Project 2016, CFA's largest ever project, will create 342 additional paid firefighter positions and construct or modify 10 integrated (volunteer and staff) fire stations over the next five years.

Chief Officer Euan Ferguson said the increasing number of fire and other emergency incidents in the State's growth corridors means CFA has to build its service delivery capacity. "Essentially, Project 2016 is about meeting our service delivery obligation to the Victorian community," Euan said.

In the first phase of the project, there will be an additional 65 positions over the next two years. There will be extra firefighters at Mornington, Melton, Patterson River, Point Cook, Rosebud, and Sunbury. In response to the introduction of Bronto ladder platforms at Traralgon and Dandenong, there will be extra firefighters at these brigades. The introduction of new hazmat vehicles at Hallam and Shepparton will also see extra firefighters placed at these stations.

"We need to act now to ensure that we support our volunteers and that they have the adequate resources needed to serve their communities," Euan said.

CFA has developed the volunteer and career integrated model over a long period. This has allowed volunteers to work closely with paid staff to provide a flexible service in busy areas.



"It reflects, too, the outstanding achievement of volunteers and paid staff working together," Euan said. "It's also really important to recognise the vital role volunteers provide in the integrated model. This is not just surge capacity in bushfires and major incidents, but also specialist skills that volunteers bring to integrated brigades." ■

Above: Recent recruits at Fiskville Training College



CASEY DENWIN

Grant helps 109 BRIGADES

CFA volunteers will be better equipped to protect our communities thanks to a share in more than \$11.6 million allocated under the new Volunteer Emergency Services Equipment Program (VESEP).

In mid August, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Peter Ryan, announced which emergency services groups had been successful in receiving the grants at an official event at Life Saving Victoria headquarters.

VESEP is a new equipment grants annual program for local emergency services volunteer groups. The program aims to enhance the capability and safety of local volunteers when responding to emergencies, and provide the State with assets to respond to the increase in bushfires, floods and heatwaves.

In the current financial year, 109 brigades received VESEP funding towards equipment such as field command vehicles (FCV), firefighting and specialist appliances, ultralight tankers, trailers and other safety equipment.

Of the 109 grants, 48 are for equipment and 61 are to upgrade or replace vehicles.

“THESE GRANTS PROVIDE VALUABLE SUPPORT TO MORE THAN 60,000 CFA MEMBERS”

Chief Officer Euan Ferguson said the funding would give a real boost to brigades across the State.

“In addition to these project grants, VESEP also allocated a Member Support grant worth \$1,500 to all CFA volunteer brigades and \$5,000 to every CFA Group to help them buy equipment specific to their various needs,” Euan said.

“These grants provide valuable support to more than 60,000 CFA members who work tirelessly and selflessly to protect our Victorian communities.”

Equipment grants have also been allocated to the Victoria State Emergency Service, Life Saving Victoria, Australian Volunteer Coast Guard, Volunteer Marine Rescue, the Southern Peninsula Rescue Squad and St John’s Ambulance Victoria.

FCV TACKLES KOONDRUCK TERRAIN

Koondrook brigade received a new FCV through VESEP in September. The vehicle replaced one that had run its race.

It will help the brigade traverse some complex terrain. “Gunbower Island is in our response area but it’s DSE land,” explained Captain Ben Archard.

“DSE looks after the tracks – they patrol when the fire season is in full force and do the community education. We can get there quicker but we’re sent away once we and DSE have knocked the fire down. It’s a lot to do with the people running DSE in Kerang. They appreciate we’re volunteers so they don’t let us hang around.”

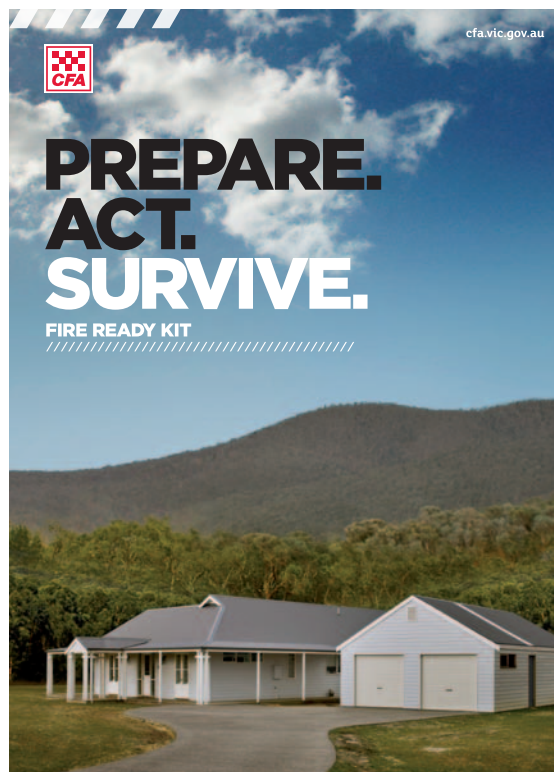
Koondrook is on the Murray River just across from Barham on the New South Wales border. Paid Fire and Rescue New South Wales firefighters at Barham Urban are on standby if Koondrook brigade is called away.

“They’re on our tails when we’re called to a structure fire,” said First Lieutenant Wes Brennan. “If it gets big enough, RFS [New South Wales Rural Fire Service] can be called in too.”

In a town with a population of 900, the brigade in the Kerang Group has 24 members, two of them women. It attended nine primary incidents in the previous year and was a support brigade at 12.

“We’re a pretty sociable brigade,” said Ben. “I don’t know a brigade that isn’t. You can’t hide anyway in a small town so you might as well mingle.” ■

Above: District 20 Operations Manager Stuart Broad gives Koondrook Captain Ben Archard the keys to their new FCV



NEW FIREREADY KIT

The CFA FireReady Kit has been updated for the 2011–12 fire season. The kit helps people assess their risk and prepare their bushfire survival plan. This season's kit emphasises the different types of risk faced in different environments. It also details the Fire Danger Ratings and what actions should be taken when these ratings are issued.

The kit stresses the importance of preparing properties effectively. Illustrations show how to prepare properties for fire, including clearing gutters of leaf litter, maintaining trees and shrubs and storing flammable materials away from houses.

"The FireReady Kit is a fantastic way to increase the public's knowledge and

understanding of bushfire and the details of bushfire policy in Victoria," said Chief Officer Euan Ferguson.

"It's important that we, as CFA volunteers and members, are familiar with the Kit contents and that we're ready to discuss it with members of the public when we meet them. Everyone in CFA is an ambassador for community safety and bushfire education." ■

The Kit has been distributed to all regions. If you'd like additional copies, contact your region's Community Education Coordinator. It's also available online at www.cfa.vic.gov.au/firesafety/bushfire/firereadykit.htm

RECOGNISING SUPPORTIVE EMPLOYERS

STORY HEATHER LINDUP

CFA is ever conscious of the important role undertaken by volunteers. But employers of volunteers, including volunteers who are self-employed, are also important.

It would be difficult for many volunteers to attend emergency incidents without the support of their employers. At their own cost, businesses release their staff and self-employed volunteers forgo personal income. Without employers' tolerance, understanding and support, CFA couldn't function as effectively as it does.

To recognise this, CFA's Member Services (part of Operational Training and Volunteerism) developed employer recognition certificates and window stickers (see photo, right), and distributed them to districts last year.

We'd like to see more volunteers nominating their employers or businesses to receive them.

If you'd like to nominate an employer to receive a Certificate of Appreciation and the stickers, contact your district headquarters. ■



IGA donates \$260,000 to CFA BRIGADES



IGA recently donated more than \$260,000 to CFA brigades across Victoria, through its 2009-10 Community Chest program.

More than 250 brigades have benefited thanks to funds raised by local IGA stores, and the money has helped brigades to buy additional equipment such as GPS units, thermal imaging cameras, breathing apparatus and even vehicles.

Mt Evelyn brigade used funds to help buy a number of vehicles, including an ultralight tanker and a field command vehicle.

Brigade Captain Jim Armstrong said: "The IGA Community Chest program has helped our brigade become better equipped with vital firefighting equipment and gear. We value this partnership as it helps to form a strong bond with the community and allows us to concentrate on our core activities, by reducing the need for fundraising."

Mildura brigade also benefited from the program, buying rescue equipment for the brigade's hazardous material vehicle.

"This rescue equipment helps us provide a well-equipped and prepared emergency response service to the local community. Being so isolated, Mildura brigade relies heavily on this local support and we're thankful for the contributions from the program," said Second Lieutenant Kaleb Sexton.

Since the partnership began in 2000, Victorian IGA stores have donated over \$2.75 million to CFA through this program. We're grateful for IGA's ongoing support. ■

Above: Mt Evelyn brigade receives the 2009-10 cheque from IGA on behalf of CFA

Above right: Wonga Park Firefighter Robert Mits explains how to use the Philips unit



NEW DEFIB UNIT

STORY **TANYA MORRISON**

Over the past 20 years, around 40 per cent of CFA line-of-duty deaths were related to cardiovascular problems.

Using a defibrillator and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) to treat sudden cardiac arrest has been shown to significantly improve patient survival rates compared with CPR alone.

A defibrillator can be bought by any CFA work location or brigade.

The current model approved for use by CFA members is the Philips HeartStart FRx. It automatically assesses the patient's heart rhythm and is designed not to deliver therapy unless the rhythm needs the shock – even if the shock button is pressed.

IT EVEN REMINDS YOU TO CALL EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

The HeartStart FRx guides you through each step with clear voice commands and visual icons. It even reminds you to call emergency medical services, and HeartStart CPR coaching can be activated at the press of a button for assistance with CPR. It also comes with a training DVD.

The flashing icons and the quick reference guide can be used to lead you through the defibrillation steps, even in situations where it's difficult to hear voice instruction.

For more information please see CFA's Acquisition and Operation of Automated External Defibrillators policy on CFA Online. ■

EUAN FERGUSON CHIEF OFFICER

MISSION COMMAND SEEKS LEADERSHIP

CFA volunteers and junior leaders will be given more power to make front line decisions under a new command and control philosophy being adopted by the organisation.

Mission Command is a philosophy that recognises the inherent chaos associated with extreme emergencies. Often in these situations normal communication and infrastructure are interrupted. Mission Command promotes decentralised decision-making, which means decisions are pushed to the lowest appropriate level of the command structure.

The 2009 Victorian bushfires caused CFA to re-examine the way that command and control is exercised in large and catastrophic emergencies. This prompted a change in our leadership approach and culture, and greater transparency in decision-making.

Crisis management expert Professor Herman Leonard gave insightful evidence to the Bushfires Royal Commission. He said: "In extreme events, the defining characteristic is the necessity for improvisation" and that greater attention to training local decision-makers in organisational goals, values and priorities, and in decision-making, is crucial.

Also at the Royal Commission, crisis expert Professor Paul 't Hart said: "Effective responses in such extreme circumstances are necessarily improvised, flexible and networked (rather than planned, standardised and centrally led). They are driven by the initiative of operational leaders and the strength of the pre-existing ties between teams..."

Mission Command originates from the 1820's Prussian command style called Auftragstaktik. It promotes decentralised decision-making, where leaders at all levels are guided by a framework of principles, a clearly expressed leader's intent, and an authority to act.

Mission Command philosophy has been adopted by international and Australian defence forces. The US Forest Service is also adopting Mission Command and it's compatible with the Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System (AIIMS) for managing emergencies.

A mission-driven culture:

- promotes leadership and initiative;
- assumes an environment of trust between senior and junior leaders;

- assumes a mutual understanding of organisational mission;
- assumes good communication and competence at the task at hand;
- considers 'rules' as authoritative but flexible;
- expects front line leaders to adapt the template of standard operating procedures to the situation to achieve the end state of the leader, or the organisation mission; and
- tolerates and supports mistakes that are made in good faith when trying to reach the leader's end state, regarding them as lessons learned.

Our adoption of the Mission Command philosophy will require greater investment in training leaders at all levels in operational and tactical decision-making. Senior leaders will express a 'leader's intent' and will delegate authority (as distinct from issuing very detailed orders). Greater attention will be given to exercising judgement in decision-making and to referencing a set of widely understood principles of operations.

I hope we will have implemented most aspects of Mission Command within a year. Outcomes will see a CFA culture where:

- senior leaders are comfortable delegating decisions;
- junior leaders accept decision-making responsibility;
- there is a bias to action;
- creativity, innovation, cooperation and self-discipline are encouraged and rewarded;
- prudent risk-taking is accepted;
- well intentioned mistakes are tolerated; and
- everyone acts as a leader.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to CFA and to your local communities in a time of great change and great activity. I call upon you to be strong, have confidence in our future and to remain positive. ■



CFA AND BRIGADES DONATIONS FUND

Chairman of the CFA and Brigades Donations Fund, Quentin Turner, has advised that, for the 2010-11 financial year, the fund received donations of \$4.8 million. This is more than \$2 million lower than the 2009-10 financial year, when a higher number of donations were received because of the Black Saturday bushfires.

Almost \$3.3 million was distributed by the fund. At 30 June 2011, the fund had a bank balance of \$1.6 million.

Mr Turner said the trustees appreciated the continued support that CFA provides free of charge to the administration and audit of the fund operations. If you have any queries about the operations of the fund, contact Catherine Richards: phone 9262 8542 or email c.richards@cfa.vic.gov.au.

To read the full report on the operations of the fund, see 'CFA and Brigades Donations Fund' report on CFA Connect. ■

LEITH HILLIARD



Transforming TONGALA

The thriving Tongala brigade maintained excellent service to its community while members built a new fire station around the one they'd outgrown.

"We did a lot of fundraising over the years," said ex-captain Ken Ferguson, "and the money built up. There are about 1,300 people in Tongala and we asked for donations around town and had a 'buy an engraved brick' scheme."

The brigade has 40 members and a few are qualified tradies. Work on the station kicked off in May 2009 when contractors began putting up the steelwork. Other qualified locals did the concreting, electrical and plumbing work.

"But we've done the hard labour and the hours," said Ken. "Everyone took it in turns."

The floor went down in April 2010 and at a series of working bees through 2010 and this year, members did the internal works, plastering and installed the kitchen.

The McConnell bus company of Tongala paid for an excavator to clear the way for landscaping, with garden beds and a barbeque area also built.

The end result is a house-proud brigade in a two-bay station with separate communications, meeting, and turnout rooms, a breathing apparatus washroom, unisex toilet and even a pool table. ■



Above: The finished station with happy members

Above right: The new station being constructed around the original one

Right: Talbot brigade's first manual pumper, Lady Don

TALBOT CELEBRATES

STORY **BERNIE CRUMPLER**



The preparations for our 150th anniversary celebrations fell into place when the Fire Services Museum arrived from Melbourne with two fire trucks and Lady Don, Talbot's first manual pumper.

The event kicked off on Saturday 5 November with a march to the previous fire station in Heales Street. Maryborough Brass Band led the way, followed by Talbot brigade members, support group and captains from the Goldfields Group.

The evening dinner at the Town Hall was attended by past and present Talbot brigade members, friends, and visiting CFA dignitaries. After several speeches, members were presented with service awards, most notably the honorary life memberships of Captain Ian Burt and Alistair Hull.

On Sunday, we marched to the football oval with Lady Don at the front drawn by two sturdy horses. Following was a procession of 23 new and old fire appliances and fire services equipment. Among the vehicles were the restored 1891 Shand Mason fire service ladder from Bendigo and the 1930 Dodge Brothers pumper from Eaglehawk.

During the afternoon there was a bucket brigade competition, hose bowling and history display. There were also activities for the kids and Captain Koala made an appearance. ■

TRENTHAM'S TEAMWORK

STORY JESSE MERCECA

Positioned on the edge of Wombat State Forest at the top of the Great Dividing Range, Trentham brigade's juniors program teaches problem solving and teamwork.

The program, which began in 2001, helps build confidence in the kids and develops an important community interaction.

"It's dedicated to giving the younger people an awareness of CFA's ongoing need and to teach them responsibility for their actions," said Trentham brigade Captain Brian Smith.

Skills training is also covered in the program, including map reading, draughting, leadership, group skills and first aid.

Many of the activities are Minimum Skills firefighting. "We run the rakehoe on the day. The juniors take the foliage off the earth to leave bare earth like we do for a real fire break," said Brian's wife, Kate.

"They also do the running grass fire drill where they've got to attack a grass fire."

Brian is very proud of his role in the program, which has seen many young people grow from cheeky youngsters to respectful adults. ■



KATE SMITH

UP FOR A CHALLENGE

There aren't too many things that Strathbogie junior brigade won't try. In the three years since the junior brigade started, the group has become proficient in pump and hose skills, and has completed orienteering and radio skills challenges. Members have also tackled several 'initiative' activities, including finding their way blindfolded through obstacle courses.

The group comprises around 20 kids from across the Strathbogie Tableland and Violet Town. Training sessions are based around CFA's strike team approach, with the strike team leader role allocated on a rotation basis.

"They can definitely take on a challenge. They've worked their butts off and have a good time while they're doing it," said group leader Chris Chitick.

The junior brigade was recognised with a special award on Australia Day last January. "It was a great honour and a great surprise for them," said group leader Robyn Paterson.

Many of the original members are now in the process of moving to the senior brigade, having completed their Minimum Skills accreditation through the CFA Advance program at Euroa Secondary College. ■



STRATHBOGIE BRIGADE

40 YEARS OF JUNIORS

STORY JOHN SCHAUBLE

In October 1971, eight boys met at the Sassafras-Ferny Creek fire station to form the junior division of the local fire brigade, and I started as a junior in 1972. The 40th anniversary of the junior brigade is a remarkable achievement for the small community of Sassafras and Ferny Creek. It currently has 15 members.

Hundreds of boys and girls aged 11 to 16 years have been members of the junior division, and many have become firefighters locally, across Victoria and interstate.

Whether or not these young people continue on into the senior brigade probably isn't the real benefit to the community. Probably more important are the life lessons about fire they take away with them and will retain for the rest of their lives.

The emphasis of our junior program is very practical and involves essentially the same basic training that senior brigade members undertake. ■



SIMONE TOMADA

YOU'VE EARNED IT



Emergency Memberlink is a key recognition program that thanks members for their significant contribution and dedication to CFA and creating safer communities.

Through Emergency Memberlink, members can receive discounts and benefits on a wide range of products and services. In excess of 250 offers are available, with new benefits being added regularly.

Details of the offers can be found in the Emergency Memberlink Guide which is sent out with all new Memberlink Cards and on the Memberlink website www.emergencymemberlink.com.au. Be sure to visit the website regularly to keep up to date.

There are a number of ways you can access your Memberlink Benefits. These include:

- Show your card and save – discounts and benefits available upon presentation of your Memberlink Card at businesses throughout Victoria, and some nationally.
- Online Shopping – goods below RRP delivered state-wide.
- Purchase Cards – Woolworths/Caltex and Coles Gift Cards available through your Memberlink team at 5% discount.
- Discount Vouchers – time limited, special offers updated regularly. Members can download these vouchers from the Memberlink website or call the Memberlink Team.

EMERGENCY MEMBERLINK CERTIFICATES OF RECOGNITION

Recently 71 Brigades received recognition for having 85% or more of their members registered with Emergency Memberlink.

We will be recognising Brigades again in early 2012. If you would like assistance to sign up more of your members, or to organise a card for yourself, contact the Emergency Memberlink Team on **1800 820 037**, register online or email members@emergencymemberlink.com.au



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Our thanks to Harvey Norman Commercial for their generosity in making this prize available.



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To make an enquiry or place an order call Rob or Linda at Harvey Norman Commercial Projects directly on (03) 8530 6300 or email victascommercial@au.harveynorman.com quoting "Emergency Memberlink" in the subject line. Our experienced and friendly staff will be pleased to assist with your enquiries regarding the extensive range of quality products available.

MEMBERLINK PROVIDERS

Full listing and more information call **1800 820 037** or visit www.emergencymemberlink.com.au

*Conditions apply and offers are subject to change. Valid to 30 June 2012.



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Chief Officer's TIN SHED BRIGADE

STORY LEITH HILLARD

Above: Euan Ferguson presents Woosang Captain Fred White with a rakehoe

With the addition of Firefighter Euan Ferguson, Woosang brigade now has 19 members, 18 of them active.

"I've known Euan for 20 years," said Captain Fred White. "We've all known him as a local and watched what he's done over the years. We were lucky that Euan married Kristin who's a local girl. The farm is still in her family and Euan has been coming up here for years. He'd give me a call and ask if he could take the truck out. He's a very easy, straight volunteer man.

"He came up in his official capacity for a Section 29 inspection in April and we were just chatting about what was going on around here. I said to him: 'How would you like to join the brigade?' and he said: 'I'd love to'. He was over the moon. He just wants to be a member of the brigade.

"We had the general meeting and election of office bearers a couple of months later and he came back. I nominated him as a new member. We voted on it and it was unanimous. We all want to see Kristin too so that's another good thing about it."

Euan is fired up about his membership. "Woosang members are typical of so many CFA volunteers around the State," he said. "They are small in number and based around a single tin shed that is the only building in the community. For Woosang, CFA is the community. They are a great bunch of people who take great pride in looking after their community and supporting other brigades.

"Kristin's family has had the farm at Woosang ever since I've known her – 32 years – and we regularly burn off grass around the farm before the fire season. My brother-in-law and I sometimes use this as an opportunity to take the tanker for a run and do a bit of pumping or draughting," said Euan.

"The state of the station and the tanker is a real credit to the brigade. Captain Fred runs a tight brigade who give him a lot of support. It's a privilege to be nominated as a member."

But will the Chief Officer take part in the brigade's everyday business? "Let's put it this way," continued Fred, "He'll be put on the next truck roster. Two of us take it out every fortnight to charge the battery. He wanted to be on the roster so there's no reason why not. He loves driving the truck."

But watch out Firefighter Ferguson. "One of our lieutenants is very particular about the truck," said Fred. "It's a 22-year-old Isuzu and it's in mint condition."

Fred has been captain of Woosang for 16 years and is proud to call it a tin shed brigade. "There are not what you'd call creature comforts at the shed," he said.

"We were affected very little by the recent floods – we just lost a few fences. We turn out about eight times a year and it's mainly grass and scrub fires. It's flat-to-undulating sheep and cropping country with a lot of scrub; a lot of mallee.

"We don't let many fires get away. We go to more support fires than turn out in our own area. Our firefighters are very experienced men. They've all handled their fair share of stubble burns.

"We're all friends. We all work together. A fire isn't a good thing, of course, but it's a good social outing afterwards. We all have a bit of a yak.

"We're pretty happy with how things are going. We don't have a lot of needs but we've been well looked after in the move to District 20." ■

D13 GROUPS VISIT FLOOD REGION

STORY MARK LANE

The Dandenong Ranges and Maroondah Groups were fortunate enough to be invited to tour the Loddon Mallee region in mid August.

I say fortunate because before the visit I was under the impression that the ramifications of the floods earlier this year were basically under control. My presumption was wrong.

Our first visit was to District 2 Headquarters in Bendigo where we were welcomed by Operations Manager Mark Gilmore, Human Resources Manager Beverley Nixon, Critical Incident Stress Coordinator Norm Bowen and Deputy Coordinator Peter Mannes.

Mark gave us a quick overview of the area that had been affected by the floods, and then he gave a framed certificate to each brigade in the Maroondah and Dandenong Ranges Groups that donated money towards flood relief earlier this year.

We then travelled to Charlton where we saw damaged buildings, pasture and crops – and roadside signs put up by disgruntled locals who had had less-than-acceptable outcomes from insurance companies.

We then met Charlton brigade members and Captain Brendan Byrne gave us a general rundown of the extent of the floods, who the floods had affected and the current situation.

Brendan gave us CDs containing flood photos. Looking at them was sobering to say the least. Needless to say there were many, many people who were still in desperate circumstances and struggling to make ends meet.

Water damaged materials, household goods and appliances, which had been dumped on nature strips and roadsides, still hadn't been taken away. It must be demoralising day after day to see so much evidence of the horror.

Charlton brigade is low on numbers but has a positive outlook and is helping in any way it can to get the area back to normality. I tip my hat to them.



NIXON WATSON

Above: Dandenong Ranges and Maroondah Group personnel with Loddon Mallee Region members at Charlton station

We then travelled to Rochester where we met Operations Manager John Cutting, Captain Mick Hassell, Secretary Graeme Watson and ex Captain Vaughan Thomas. John described the damage caused by the floods and Mick talked about the brigade's experiences and the current situation.

In August Rochester was still a long way from normality and needed the fundamentals for families to live in a way we take for granted.

Retail and rural businesses have been severely affected as many have no job, which in turn affects the local economy.

It was an eye opening tour that has made me aware of the basic survival requirements we all need and take for granted.

A big thank you to the generosity of Maroondah and Dandenong Ranges brigades who've donated around \$10,000 to help these devastated townships. The money from our flood relief appeal was used to buy basic products such as shampoo, soap, toothpaste, school books and children's toys. ■

Mark Lane is Group Officer of Dandenong Ranges and a volunteer with Clematis brigade.

IN BRIEF

EDDY'S MILESTONE

In mid September Edwin 'Eddy' Burr received a 65-year service medal from Operations Officer Don Tomkins and Hillcrest brigade Captain Rick Shaw.

Eddy has been a station Secretary for 26 years and Group Officer of the then Upper Yarra Group for more than 10 years.

He clearly has a passion for volunteering, having been a local councillor (including Shire President for Upper Yarra Shire), Chairman of the local Water Trust and President of the Progress Association.

"Today was special, as it was the first time I've presented a 65-year service medal," said Don.

POOWONG GETS TANKER AND STATION

Poowong brigade received a new \$120,000 ultralight tanker in mid September and at the same time there was an official announcement that it was getting a new fire station.

The good news was delivered by Deputy Premier and Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Peter Ryan, who commended the brigade on its service to the local community for more than 60 years.

The new ultralight tanker will be used in areas that the brigade's 3.4D tanker can't reach. It will also be used for transport duties, to limit the use of volunteers' private vehicles.

Poowong brigade Captain Stephen Douglas was extremely pleased with the tanker, which has already proven its worth at a number of turnouts and training exercises.

"It was great to show it off to the local community, who have

been really supportive. The Apex Club, Lions Club and Australian Ride On Lawn Mower Racing Association helped us a lot with fundraising events," said Stephen.

The new station is also great news for the brigade, which has outgrown its current home.

"The new station will be able to accommodate our trailer (which includes a lighting plant, telescopic mast and quickfill pump) which we have to store outside my house," said Stephen.

According to Gippsland Regional Manager, Mark Reid, the new tanker is another great example of strong partnerships.

"Funding for this vehicle was made possible through a strong partnership between CFA, state government and the brigade – as well as substantial input from local community groups as well as IGA," Mark said. ■

Watchem gets a NEW TANKER

STORY CHRIS JEFFERY

The allocation of a more up to date tanker to Watchem brigade in District 18 illustrates CFA's belief in the strength and future viability of the brigade, according to Captain Chris Colbert.

The new tanker is a 2008 Hino 2.4C acquired from Upper Ferntree Gully. It replaces a 1999 Hino 3.2D tanker. Captain Colbert commented on the tanker's excellent condition and hoped the brigade would be able to keep it that way.

On a sunny day at the end of July, District 18 Operations Officer for Buloke Catchment, Mat Gardner, assessed brigade members on their competency to operate the tanker.

The assessments involved operating the tanker's pump and

outlets, delivering water to the live hose reel, draughting water from Watchem Lake, setting up a hydrant and connecting to the tanker, changing over from tank supply to hydrant supply and operating the crew protection systems in the event of a burnover.

Brigade members excelled and following the assessments the members, their families and community members enjoyed a barbecue lunch at the fire station.

While their previous 3.2D tanker was a fantastic appliance, the new 2.4C tanker is proving to be simpler to use and will be a valuable asset to the Watchem community. ■

IN BRIEF

NEW PUMPER DELIVERED

In early August, Dunolly brigade received a new Hino 3.4C pumper/tanker that's fitted with the latest crew safety updates.

Skye brigade members got their hands on a much needed new light pumper at the end of August.

At the end of September, Stawell brigade Captain Tim Hughes was presented with the keys of a new Isuzu 2.4D medium pumper by District 16 Operations Manager John Maguire.

Pyramid Hill and Wedderburn brigades in district 20 received new Hino light pumpers at the beginning of October.

G.O.D. STEPS DOWN

Group Officer Doug, that is, Doug Morrison has been Tyrrell Group Officer for 10 years and was captain of Dumosa brigade for 10 years before that.

Loddon Mallee's Tyrrell Group includes Berriwilllock, Culgoa, Dumosa, Narraport, Nullawil, Sea Lake, Wycheproof, Wycheproof South and Nandaly. Dumosa lies between Nullawil and Wycheproof. "We join those two towns together," said Doug. "We've got a bit of friendly rivalry going back to childhood."

"Our fire season is October to February and cropping is May to June," said Doug. "It's good that a lot of prior learning is taken into account in CFA. My grandparents burned stubble, my parents burned stubble and I've been burning stubble all my life. We're experienced with stubble fires because we've done controlled burning of stubble in our work practices."

"I think the group role for me has been about trying to instil enthusiasm at group meetings and exercises. We are sociable. You go to meetings because it's good to see each other."

"CFA looks after us well. They appreciate the fact that we show quite a bit of initiative." Dumosa brigade was founded in 1942 and Doug's grandfather was one of the original members. The brigade's current truck and shed are around 23 years old.



LEITH HILLIARD

The brigade turns out once a year on average but might go three or four years without an incident. There are currently 36 brigade members, all farmers, with two strike team leaders and four crew leaders protecting the property of 120 locals.

Doug is staying on as third deputy group officer. "There are so many meetings and so much training in the group role. We're enthusiastic about CFA but we don't live and die it. I could just feel that I wasn't as keen as I used to be."

"I didn't want to stifle some new, bright person. It can be the young bull versus the old bull." ■

FISKVILLE FAREWELLS OPS OFFICER

Fiskville Training College Operations Officer Robin Parsons has brought his long and outstanding career to an end following 48 years of service in CFA as a volunteer and staff member.

Robin cites his father, a CFA volunteer, as the biggest influence over him wanting to be a firefighter. "I'd see Dad head out with the brigade to fight bushfires with just knapsacks and beaters in those days," said Robin. "I knew even then that all I wanted to be was a firefighter." At just 12 years old Robin started as a junior member of the Geelong City Brigade.

After around 10 years as a volunteer with Geelong City, he successfully applied to become a career firefighter. "Back then, the recruit course took just four weeks," said Robin. "There were only three instructors at Fiskville and the facilities were very basic."

Following his training in 1972, Robin returned to Geelong City as a paid firefighter and 15 months later was appointed Station Officer Grade One at Frankston. Later, his career included stints at Warrnambool, Geelong West and Belmont brigades before transferring to Fiskville in 1999.

Robin has some fairly sage wisdom for aspiring operational members after almost half a century of experience in CFA. "Building relationships with volunteers, the community and with members of other emergency service agencies and the police is very important.

"When you go to a local incident it's a good start if you know the first name of the local policeman or ambulance officer, so forming solid working relationships is essential." ■



ANNIE HERITAGE

MINGAY'S NEW STATION

STORY ANNIE HERITAGE

On a beautiful, sunny day at the end of August, Mingay brigade celebrated the opening of its new station.

Member of Parliament for Western Victoria, Simon Ramsay, officially opened the new station. Other attendees included Corangamite Shire Councillor Geoff Smith, Barwon South West Regional Manager Bob Barry, CFA Board member Robert Spencer and Mingay Captain Steve Greig.

The day began in the new station where Bob Barry welcomed everyone. Simon Ramsay spoke about the importance of new fire stations in the district and acknowledged the wonderful efforts

CFA volunteers contribute to their communities.

Steve gave a speech thanking everyone for their involvement and making the day such a success. Special thanks went to brigade members and their families for their continuing support.

After the official opening, District 6 Operations Manager, Mal Fallon, presented brigade members with service awards.

Everyone then enjoyed a delicious barbecue lunch. The day was considered a huge success by all.

David Barr deserves a special mention because he presented a fantastic history of Mingay brigade. ■



MATTHEW GARDNER

Sea Lake's AIR ATTACK

Until the end of December, Loddon Mallee region can attack fires from the air.

The Type 2 medium firebombing helicopter and Air Attack Supervisors Platform (fixed wing plane) are based at Sea Lake. This is the first time an aerial capability has been provided specifically to support fire operations in the Mallee for the harvest. ■



AMM SCHULBERGER

Coast Guards SET TO FIGHT FIRES

In mid August, Coast Guard volunteers in Hastings became the first flotilla to learn CFA firefighting skills.

The volunteers completed the Marine Fire Responder course, which means they can respond to fires on water without the need for CFA firefighters to jump on board.

It's hoped the transfer of skills will reduce response times on the water, while ensuring service delivery to the community remains at the highest standards.

CFA Coast Guard Liaison David Hatcher said Volunteer Coast Guard is happy to support CFA with fighting fires on water.

"This training should be a requirement for all Coast Guard volunteers. We are proud to say we are CFA members as well as Coast Guard members," David said.

"Obviously our number one priority is to save lives and now we have firefighting

equipment and training to help us achieve this mission."

Hastings brigade volunteer Alex Satragno, who trained the seven Coast Guard members, said he had been waiting eagerly to be part of this project.

"This is, so to speak, like giving birth to a firefighting water service. Hastings Coast Guard receives usually around 100 call-outs a year – that's more than some of our CFA stations. So I believe it's essential for all Coast Guard members to obtain their basic firefighting skills," Alex said.

The Coast Guard boat at Hastings used to carry only fire extinguishers on board, but it now has a permanent CFA pump installed.

Following Hastings, Frankston Coast Guard completed the course, and Carrum and Safety Beach Coast Guards are nearing the end of their training. ■

Above: Hastings Volunteer Coast Guard gets firefighting training

AWARD FOR WARANGA GROUP'S SCHOOL PROGRAM

Waranga Group was given a Loddon Mallee Region Initiative Award in August for a community involvement program it runs with Rushworth P-12 College.

"It's been identified that Year 9 students are at risk of becoming disengaged from school," said Deputy Group Officer Robert Brown. "The program was set up about 10 years ago in partnership with the school while we were in District 22. Its purpose was to give the kids a sense of community and show them a different style of learning, and that's still what it's about."

The program begins in term two and runs until half way through the final term. Year 9 students are taken through Minimum Skills by members of Colbinabbin, Stanhope and Rushworth brigades from Waranga Group, while District 22's Murchison brigade also remains committed.

And what a commitment. "It's predominantly the same members involved," continued Robert. "They're in there by 9am every Wednesday and finish at about 1pm. It can get pretty tough finding the time every week but the rewards are worth it.

Right: Rushworth P-12 College students doing a two line attack exercise



CASS ALEXANDER

"It gets CFA in the school. What's great is to see the kids develop over the year. They start out pretty quiet but by the end of the year they're quite active and involved.

"Rushworth, Stanhope, Colbinabbin and Murchison brigades have all got quite a few new members out of the program, and they tend to become very strong members in the brigades they join."

Rushworth also worked hard to support a recent Home Bushfire Advice Service campaign. Its work, distributing flyers and promoting the visits to local schools and senior citizens groups, led to more than 70 households taking up the service. ■



DISTRICT 10 TACKLES STRUCTURES STORY TERRY GOODWIN

Brigades from across District 10 in Gippsland converged on Traralgon's multistorey car park in mid August for a series of exercises.

More than 60 people from 15 brigades carried out structural fire training by doing a round robin of four exercises: pumping/boosting, ladder work, salvage, and forcible entry.

Each exercise gave crew members an insight into procedures and equipment that they may not normally have a chance to use or put into practice.

The day was organised by the District 10 training committee with help from Station Officer Aaron Worcester, Senior Station Officer Gavin Parker, Leading

Firefighters Greg Fisher and Steve Morgan from Traralgon brigade and Senior Station Officer Ross Male from Morwell brigade.

"The venue brought a sense of realism to the exercise, the involvement of station staff created a solid mentoring process and the participants either learned something new or refreshed their skills," said Phil Bloink, Chairman of District 10's training committee.

The Royal Exchange Hotel Cork Club chipped in with a barbecue lunch to round off the training.

Operations Manager Alan Rankin congratulated all involved, both staff and volunteers, for running a successful training day. ■

WONTHAGGI'S TEAM CHALLENGE STORY JAMIE MORESCO

Ifelt Wonthaggi brigade needed to make its training a bit more exciting to keep the interest of the members. After discussing some ideas, we decided to run a six-week team challenge during August and September

The challenges were an underwater exercise, a minor equipment round robin, driving skills, decontamination challenge, orienteering and structure attack.

At an informal social night, we explained the process to all the members and ran a 'goals and aspirations' night. This gave me the opportunity to talk one on one with each member about their training likes and dislikes and what they wanted to get out of brigade training.

The information I received from the members will be the foundation of our brigade training plan for the next 12 months.

We divided the brigade into four teams, picked team leaders, and chose names for the teams. By the second round, team spirit was starting to show and one team organised team shirts that were specially printed with their names.

For the round robin, we asked SES to provide lighting and help run two of the four drills. Drills included knocking down milk bottles by bowling a 64mm hose, a rural running team drill, lowdown pump and ladder, and moving equipment across a course using only carpet mats



and without touching the ground. This was a lot of fun.

The third week saw us testing our driving skills. Each team had to reverse three selected vehicles around a course in the dark.

In the fourth week our teams had to set up and operate the deco shower, set up the deco bath, dress two splash suit operators and recover a drum, and then undress the wearers. This ensured we had good equipment handling training while having fun.

In the orienteering challenge, the teams had to follow a list of clues, and in the last week teams did a basic structure fire exercise.

At the final count, Jane's Jugheads won the six-week challenge. ■

Left: Nathan Stebbing (Wonthaggi brigade) and David Milnes (Dalyston brigade) relax before the six-week challenge

Melton BREATHES EASY

KEITH PAKENHAM

STORY BLAIR DELLEMIJN

Qualifying to use compressed air breathing apparatus (BA) isn't for the faint-hearted. You have to be fit, mentally adept at walking into an environment that every fibre of your being tells you not to enter, a good communicator, and good at adapting to ever-changing environments.

In mid August, Melton brigade put three firefighters through their breathing apparatus certification at CFA's Fiskville Training College.

How to maintain a BA set, naming every part, and showing how it works, donning it safely and effectively, search and casualty-carrying techniques are just some of the topics covered at the station. Then after the theory it was time to visit Fiskville.

Melton firefighters Simon Vamplew, Mike Shaw, and David Clancy were a bit anxious, but also excited at the prospect of entering a hostile environment and putting all their training into action. District 14's instructor, Kris Wilms, pulled out a stopwatch – one of the assessments is to put on a BA set and perform the relevant safety checks as set out in the *Fire Ground Practices* in 90 seconds (100 seconds when using a flash hood).

Then it was out to the real world on the training pads. For anyone that has never been to Fiskville, the sight of smoke pouring out of houses can be a little daunting.

Everyone was split up into search pairs, each with at least one assessor to watch their every move.

"You've just arrived at this house. No idea if there are any people inside, so you will need to undertake a primary search with a hose line," explained the assessors. A primary search is a quick, room by room methodical search of a structure.

Within, minutes, the first 'casualty' was pulled out of the structure and passed to 'paramedics'.

Over the next month there was more training back at Melton. Appliances were removed from the engine bay and obstacles were put in the space. Tables, chairs and bedding were placed in a way you would find in a typical house. The firefighters had to refine their search technique – moving their hands, sweeping with their feet.

REASSESSMENT AT FISKVILLE

They paired up again and entered the first structure. Visibility was zero. This is where touching and listening come into play.

"Fire brigade. Is there anyone in here?" they yelled as they entered each room. When they found the casualty, they had to quickly and safely exit the building. Outside, they looked at their air gauges to work out how much time they had to search the rest of the house, then went back inside.

After completing the search, it was time to change cylinders and get ready for the next phase – a secondary search of a two-storey structure.

One thing to remember is to drink plenty of fluids. With the hard work being done in BA while in turnout gear and flash hood, you sweat a lot and lose fluids quickly.

The final assessment was to search a three-storey building without smoke or heat. But the flash hoods were turned around to cover their masks. It was as if they were in a smoky environment.

The firefighters passed the training with flying colours, so Melton brigade now has three more BA operators who are more confident in search and rescue. ■



Right: Melton brigade's Mike Shaw, David Clancy, and Simon Vamplew are happy they've completed BA training

CRAIGIEBURN HOSTS DISPLAY

Craigieburn brigade showcased specialist appliances and equipment in mid August to familiarise its newest volunteers with CFA and other emergency services.

The event was part of ongoing training but was delivered in a more informal way. "It's intended as a bit of a break from their regular training and finishes with a barbecue for all those involved. The families of recruits are encouraged to attend and have a look round the station and get to know a few of the members," said Craigieburn Leading Firefighter Troy Lowther.

"The day was a great success and participants and brigade members' feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

"It was great that we were able to have a wide variety of appliances gathered in one place and we also invited some new SES recruits and neighbouring Kalkallo brigade to join us."

Displays included the Dandenong hazmat detection vehicle, Epping rescue unit, Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board Teleboom 7, South Morang Flare-off, Craigieburn Community Emergency Response Team, Victoria Police, SES, and Sunbury Breathing Apparatus Support. ■



BLAIR DELLEMMO

Above: Craigieburn's multi-agency training session showcased a range of equipment

Left: Eddie Rozitis shows new recruits how to roll and bowl a hose

POREPUNKAH'S NEW VOLS

STORY SARAH BLACK



SARAH BLACK

At the end of September training officers in the Ovens Valley Group dusted off the Minimum Skills training notes and welcomed keen new operational members.

Porepunkah is a small town just down the road from Bright, but its response area is quite large and includes some very isolated and challenging terrain. Mt Buffalo National Park is just a part of this, as well as pine plantations, mountainous eucalypt forest and narrow valleys.

Members of the brigade are a varied lot, both in age and occupation. A number are farmers, which often makes turnouts to smaller fires difficult especially during harvest time. We also have members who live and work either in Porepunkah, nearby towns such as Bright or as far away as Wangaratta. Such is the make up of many rural brigades and, indeed, the wonderful diversity of CFA.

Porepunkah Training Officer Ed Rozitis, with assistance from me, introduced three new recruits to the basics in readiness to begin their Minimum Skills program. We covered tanker layout and equipment, pump operations, hose laying and handling skills.

A few more Saturdays will be spent in the classroom with other newbies from nearby brigades, to cover firefighting theory and safety among other things. The recruits will then sit their practical and theory exam and be welcomed into the crew this summer. ■

IN BRIEF

ALEXANDRA'S BASIC DRILLS

To prepare for the grass and forest fire season, almost 90 members from Alexandra Group brigades participated in a major exercise at the end of October.

The exercise took place around Acheron and 15 firefighting vehicles and crews rotated through a range of activities including grass fire attack methodology, pumping, relaying water supplies, rakehoe use, chainsaws, tree safety, working with bulldozers and general command and control.



Bogong's NEW JOURNEY

Bogong Group was officially created earlier this year and its first get together was a training exercise in mid September at Yackandandah.

Weeks of planning by the group training officers and strong support all round (including Wangaratta training ground personnel who provided breathing apparatus and gas prop trailers) really paid off, according to Deputy Group Officer David Box.

“People might say to themselves that this was a fairly standard group exercise. But this was also part of our journey to make Bogong a group that looks after its brigades collectively and its communities as best it possibly can.”

The Bogong Group consists of 14 brigades, and was created

through an amalgamation of the southern brigades from the former Pilot and Kiewa Groups. More than 100 volunteers tackled three scenarios – draughting/pumping, a gas attack, and asset protection with safety and survival entrapment. A building belonging to a local business provided the opportunity for structural search and rescue scenarios on three sectors.

David said the feeling of the day was friendly and supportive, with the focus on learning, skills maintenance and getting to know your crew mates, rather than being a test of knowledge.

“I think it turned out to be a positive experience for all the brigades and crews – even before those bangers and burgers were bunged on the barbecue,” he said. ■

IN BRIEF

TAMBO TESTS ITS SKILLS

Tambo Group brigades Lakes Entrance, Kalimna West, Johnsonville, Mossi-Tambo, Sarsfield and Metung put their draughting and water relay skills to the test on the banks of the Nicholson River.

The new group pumping trailer was given a good work out, followed by a burnover drill. Group Officer John Upton was pleased with the exercise and brigade members gained valuable experience.

CONTROL LINE TAKES COMMAND

Hosted by Bayswater brigade at the Karralyka Centre, Ringwood, the eighth annual Control Line masterclass was attended by around 180 emergency services personnel who manage complex incidents.

Peter Ryan, Deputy Premier of Victoria and Minister for Regional and Rural Development, Police and Emergency Services and Bushfire Response, gave the official welcome. His attendance alongside Fire Services Commissioner Craig Lapsley demonstrated how highly regarded Control Line has become.

Craig Lapsley clarified that the Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner (OESC) will carry out at least eight reviews a year of house fires, bushfires and hazmat incidents. “There’s going to be a lot more reviewing and auditing going on,” he said. “Leadership, accountability and integration are keywords for the OESC.”

The afternoon consisted of an exercise. The scenario was an earthquake in Melbourne that was unfolding in real time. Road access was difficult, power was out, many large fires were burning, and air quality was poor.

Multi-agency IMTs needed to be established for response, relief

and recovery. The mixed-agency participants had to implement incident management and field command structures while avoiding excessive group think.

The objectives were to identify issues that would prevent an effective response, prioritise, and develop courses of action.

Eastern Metropolitan Regional Commander Graeme Armstrong was one of the Incident Controllers.

“We placed an emphasis on accurate, timely and relevant information to the community. We had to assume they didn’t have anything much and communications systems, power supplies and road networks were down. You had to get in there with carrier pigeon-type technology so we had a lot of street patrols and loudspeakers.

“We set up evacuation points and criteria for suitable sites for evacuation. Where would our command points be? We factored in the wider impact outside the earthquake zone. There had to be statewide consideration.”

Graeme was enthusiastic about the exercise and the day as a whole. “There’s always value in networking and understanding the capacities of other agencies before we ‘go to war’.” ■

LES CARBUTT



TEENS TRAPPED IN CHURCH

Firefighters rescued a group of teenagers trapped in a smoke-filled Diamond Valley church in early September.

Led by Plenty brigade, the exercise gave the 54 volunteers an opportunity to build their skills in incident management, using breathing apparatus, communication, first aid and welfare.

Plenty brigade Captain Adrian Marshman said the training was held in partnership with the Diamond Valley Baptist Church's X Factor Youth Group.

"As part of the exercise, 112 teenagers were attending normal Friday night activities at the church when party smoke was released into the church, forcing an evacuation," Adrian said.

"Of the 112 youths, 10 remained missing. The casualties were eventually found in the very heavy smoke and were brought out for first aid and welfare checks."

Brigades from Plenty, Diamond Creek, Wattle Glen, Yarrambat, South Morang, Mernda and Doreen took part. The Nillumbik Group mobile control vehicle and Bayswater breathing apparatus filling van were also used.

"The exercise was a great success and has better prepared our firefighters in the areas of search and rescue.

"It has also strengthened ties to ensure brigades throughout Northern and Western Metro communities can work together and be prepared for all major incidents in the area," Adrian added. ■

Above right: Incident Controllers Captain Adrian Marshman and Lieutenant Earle Webber from Plenty brigade

TUNGAMAH HOSTS JAE

On a sunny Sunday morning in mid October more than 170 firefighters and 25 fire trucks assembled at Tungamah for the Joint Agencies Emergency Exercise (JAE) 2011.

Crews from as far away as Eldorado to the east, Lurg and Tatong to the south and from across the New South Wales border carried out four scenarios: tanker tactics for attacking a fast moving grassfire, entrapment (burnover drill), sandbagging and structure fire and rescue.

In addition to CFA crews, there were participants from DSE/Parks Victoria, Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria, SES, NSW Rural Fire Service, Fire and Rescue NSW and NSW National Parks.

A Level 2 incident management team ran parallel to the exercises, linked to a fully functioning municipal emergency coordination centre at Cobram.

According to Brian Lawrence, a firefighter with Peechelba brigade, the tanker tactics exercise was particularly worthwhile in sharpening up skills.

"It's been great for new members or members who don't normally get to work on strike teams to see what we do – to experience radio communication and the way orders are followed and delivered on the fireground," Brian said.

Event chairperson and Deputy Group Officer Jeff Nunn praised the local organising committee.

"We got this committee up years ago to build relationships between the agencies. We've done that and each year we build better," Jeff said.

"If we go into battle, into 'war' as they like to say, it's a big plus to know the people you're working alongside."

Jack Tynan, who helped to organise the event and coordinated logistics on the day, said: "Over the winter people normally get a bit rusty and this enhances the normal brigade training.

"As the exercise went on things got better and better. That's what an exercise is all about – a bit rusty at the start, coming good at the end." ■



Mt Cottrell RUES THE RAIN

STORY **BLAIR DELLEMIJN**

At the end of October torrential rain, hail, and storms threatened to put a dampener on the 2011 Mount Cottrell Group exercise involving more than 100 members from 11 brigades.

Even though a planned hazard reduction roadside burn couldn't be carried out, crews were put through their paces with draughting from a dam, collar tank and roadside water tank, quickfill operations, map reading, fire and weather mapping, incident control centre and DivComm operations, and safety and survival techniques including a burnover drill.

There was also an impromptu vehicle recovery, when a tanker

became bogged because of the heavy rain the day before.

The event was coordinated by Deputy Group Officer and Group Training Officer Ray Dickson, who thought the day went very well.

"It was a great opportunity for members to get together, to meet their neighbouring brigades and see what other resources and assets are available in the Mount Cottrell Group," he said.

In addition to the general exercises, Ray said there was a focus on training the newly-accredited strike team leaders.

Many thanks to Toolern Vale brigade and the Lions Club of Sunbury for putting on a great breakfast and lunch. ■

IN BRIEF

VECTOR TRAINING

In mid October volunteers from the Ovens Valley Group did a training exercise using the Vector system, a computer simulator. The volunteers, who control mapping and messages, had to make quick decisions in planning how to put out a grass fire.

Incident Controller Graham Healy said the exercise reflected the new priorities for controllers introduced by the Fire Services Commissioner: protection of life, community warnings, protection of critical infrastructure, protection of assets and protection of environmental and conservation values.

INVESTIGATORS BRUSH UP THEIR SKILLS

STORY **NICOLE HARVEY**

During September and October 25 fire investigators from across the State attended two structural fire investigation skills maintenance courses at Fiskville Training College.

The courses enhance fire investigators' technical knowledge and skill level in structural fire investigation.

The course began with a theoretical session that gave an update of fire investigation techniques. It included suspicious fire scene investigation protocols, scene safety, collecting evidence, and compiling reports.

Following this session investigators had to assess a structural room fire scene and establish the origin and cause of the fire. To set this up, several room burns were done in the purpose-built rooms at Fiskville before the course began. The rooms had plastered walls, carpet, windows, fittings and fixtures, and were fully furnished.

To make the scenes as realistic as possible, investigators interviewed a number of witnesses, including the incident controller and/or the first firefighter on scene, the occupier of the property and neighbours.



After their investigation, participants presented their reports, then watched videos that showed how the fires were ignited and how they developed. ■

A FIRST FOR fire awareness

STORY SONIA MACLEAN



MARTIN ANDERSON

“TO CONQUER THE ENEMY WITHOUT HAVING TO RESORT TO WAR IS THE HIGHEST, MOST ADMIRABLE FORM OF GENERALSHIP”

— SUN TZU

These were the words of wisdom chosen by CFA Chief Officer Euan Ferguson as he delivered an opening address to more than 120 CFA volunteers all passionate about fostering fire awareness, preparedness and prevention in their communities.

In a significant first for CFA, members came together from across the State for the inaugural Community Engagement and Fire Awareness Forum, held at Macedon in late October.

Ali Martin, who leads the member engagement project and played a major role in organising the forum, said that the aim of the forum was to get like-minded people to network, talk and share ideas – and the event exceeded all expectations.

“The buzz and enthusiasm that came from having so many fantastic people in the same room at the same time – it’s hard to describe.

“There are a lot of very, very successful initiatives out there,” she said. “We had presentations from several

brigades about programs that are up and running and having a hugely positive impact at a local level.

“On top of this there were any number of ideas being thrown around, whether in organised sessions or over lunch. I think everyone came away with a wealth of ideas and inspiration to take back to their brigades and their communities.

“This forum has given us a platform for the next phase of our project, which is about creating more opportunities for our front line people to get involved with community safety,” Ali said.

Ali reflected that the Chief’s words had resonated with the audience because they showed that CFA was no longer just about responding to fires.

“It was powerful to hear our operational leader speaking so passionately about community safety,” Ali said.

Some of the forum highlights were:

- Hamilton brigade presenting their Brigade Blitz program – all operational members must have their own bushfire plan;
- Bruce Conboy of Mt Martha brigade talking about the brigade’s support team model for working in conjunction with operational firefighters;
- David Brown (Wodonga) and Daniel Eshuis (Warragul) talking about the use of social media to engage communities; and
- Niki Habibis, a community education coordinator and captain of St Leonards-Indented Head brigade, explaining how vulnerable community members are being engaged in Corio. ■

WHAT THEY SAID

“Wow! What a weekend. Arrived quite oblivious to it all and what it was about, and left with an immense amount of respect for what we are trying to do and the messages we are trying to get out there.”

– Julie De Loryn, Olinda

“I learned a lot to take back to my brigade – I’ll pass on the experiences of many of the people who were there.”

– Craig Griffiths, Nagambie

“I haven’t taken that many notes ever. I think ‘buzzing’ is an understatement. I still feel like I’m flying at 40,000 feet.”

– Matthew Grace, Noble Park

“For the whole three hours it took us [to get home from Macedon], our carload didn’t stop talking about it!”

– Daniel Eshuis, Warragul

“We will take back to our brigades and communities some very positive ideas and thoughts from the inspirational and motivated speakers.”

– Robyn Gerrard, Beaufort

“It was a pleasure to be in the company of so many people who love community engagement as much as I do.”

– Tracey Mastropavlos, Heathcote

“It walked the talk by giving recognition to those hard-working members who often don’t get the recognition they deserve.”

– Kay Hawkins, Christmas Hills



KATH GANNON/MAIL NEWSPAPER GROUP

Above: TRIP presenters Sergeant Tom Wilkinson, Daniel van den Hoek, paramedic Colin McLeod and event MC and CFA Operations Officer Don Tomkins

TEENS TAKE A SAFE TRIP STORY FIONA BURNS

In mid August CFA, SES, Victoria Police and Ambulance Victoria combined forces in the Yarra Valley to deliver the Teenage Road Information Program (TRIP) to around 340 local community members.

TRIP is primarily aimed at changing teenage driving behaviour. The program gives an in-depth insight into what happens to road crash victims and the aftermath from injuries and fatalities. It's designed to be a hard hitting presentation, delivered by people who attend the crash scene and know first hand the devastation caused.

Fittingly, the presentation was held at Heritage Funeral Home in Woori Yallock.

Acting Regional Commander Dave Renkin opened the evening. He talked about the origins of the program and emphasised that the success of the program depended on each participant changing their driving behaviour.

The TRIP message applies to all drivers irrespective of age and experience. The results of poor driving behaviours – using a mobile phone, listening to distracting music, doing burnouts, failing to wear a seatbelt, or not taking into account road conditions – were presented in a series of video clips.

The next session was facilitated by Leading Firefighter Robert

Mace. The presentation included a car cut and an interview with a man who was involved in a serious car accident. Using audience participation, the last part of the presentation showed the far-reaching effects of an accident. People in the audience stood up to represent crash victims, other road users, emergency service workers, hospital staff, air ambulance paramedics, police officers, family and friends and members of the community affected by serious injuries and fatalities.

Daniel van den Hoek, a local sportsman from Wandin, was 18 at the time of his accident around six years ago and suffered life-threatening injuries. Daniel was part of a panel discussion with Sergeant Tom Wilkinson who asked him about the causes and consequences of his accident. Daniel's uncle also spoke about what it was like to receive a message about a family member being involved in a serious accident.

Daniel's message was clear. His accident has affected him, his best mate, his parents, school friends and his sporting career. Daniel's personal message and plea to all drivers to adopt good driving behaviour touched the audience. ■

If you have any enquiries about TRIP, contact CFA Woori Yallock Service Centre on (03) 5961 5617.

COMMUNITY ADVICE IN YOUR POCKET

CFA has produced a handy pocket guide to help volunteers talk to their communities about bushfire safety.

This season's *Members Quick Reference Guide* has a 'frequently asked questions' section and is designed to support members who handle queries from the public.

"I reckon it's going to be a great help, especially for those brigades who are active in community safety," said Mick Daws, a volunteer firefighter at South Wangaratta and newly signed up FireReady Victoria presenter.

"It's easy to read, it's got the key messages and it's all nicely set out for volunteers in the pocket size," he said.

Adam Barnett, Executive Officer with Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria, pointed to evidence that shows local brigade members are a highly trusted source of information.

"The guide will help members speak confidently and assertively. As a CFA member you have an important voice and profile in your community," he said.

The 2011-12 *Members Quick Reference Guide* covers grassfires, bushfire survival planning, back-up planning, last resort options, Fire Danger Ratings, and alerts and warnings. It also gives a straightforward overview of the various products and services on offer from CFA. ■

If you'd like a copy contact your district headquarters or email memberengagement@cfa.vic.gov.au.

HAMILTON'S BRIGADE BLITZ

Last year when a senior member of Hamilton brigade talked to his partner about how she would protect herself while he was out fighting a bushfire, he realised she had little idea of what to do.

Fast forward to 2011 and the result is 'Brigade Blitz', a program that will eventually see every active firefighter with a household bushfire survival plan.

Hamilton Brigade Secretary Peter Wall said the idea initially met with a bit of resistance but he said "the penny always drops" once he explains the rationale. "In essence, where's your family going to be when you're out on the truck?"

So far, 10 of the brigade's 30 active members have a plan and, to support the rest,

the brigade is organising a bushfire planning workshop to be held before Christmas.

"They'll be able to walk out of that workshop with a finished plan," Peter said.

Macclesfield brigade is also organising planning workshops this summer, in conjunction with a local pony club, aimed at horse owners.

Captain Sharon Merritt said the area had one of the highest populations of horses per hectare in Victoria, and pony club members – from CFA and the wider public – had benefited a lot from last year's session.

"Horse owners need to have a plan for a forecast fire risk day," Sharon said.

"Putting a horse into a float at the last minute when it's extremely hot and there are lights and sirens going, is simply not realistic." ■



NEIL GRANT

PRESTIGIOUS AWARD FOR CFA EDUCATOR

From Kinglake to Kabul, a book co-edited by CFA's David Williams, won the Australian Publishers Association Best Teaching Resource award for secondary schools in 2011's Australian Awards for Excellence in Educational Publishing.

"The award is significant because it recognises the value of teaching and learning about bushfire and recovery in secondary schools," said David.

David started the project when he was Head of English at Diamond Valley College, Diamond Creek.

"I live in Kinglake and my own experiences of Black Saturday and the aftermath helped me work with my students to make sense of what happened through writing and publishing. This experience will help as we develop CFA's secondary education program.

"The students' stories of Black Saturday help to preserve history and are being studied in secondary schools all over Australia. Students like to hear about the experiences of people their own age and these moving accounts are an important part of our history.

"After being so involved in bushfire recovery, it's great to now be working with CFA and applying my experience and expertise to preparedness and safety."

David now leads the community development team working on CFA's secondary school bushfire education program. He has recently completed a school bushfires text book aimed at Years 7 and 9.

"CFA hasn't had a formal secondary education program before and there's huge interest in it. It's very exciting and there are many challenges, but it's important to get it right and sustainable. The 370,000-odd secondary students living in Victoria deserve a high quality education about bushfire safety."

CFA's secondary school program will officially kick off at the start of the next school year. CFA is also planning to do a series of regional professional development seminars for teachers, to encourage schools to teach our bushfire program. ■

Above: David Williams using the book From Kinglake to Kabul to help students understand about bushfires



Little Desert Fire CONFERENCE

Above left: A fire table simulates different fire scenarios

Chief Officer Euan Ferguson joined around 100 fire and emergency management delegates from Western Victoria and Melbourne for this year's Little Desert Fire Conference in mid August.

The gathering at Pimpinio, north of Horsham, was the 40th annual conference conducted in the Wimmera.

The event started with a morning tea at the Pimpinio Football Club, followed by a four-wheel-drive tour of the Wail State Forest and eastern block of the Little Desert National Park, focusing on a range of fire management topics and land management issues.

This was the first time the Chief had attended the annual Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) fire conference, which he said was a great opportunity for local networking.

"I really enjoyed gathering with all the different members from

fire and emergency services. We were able to thoroughly discuss some of the high priority fire and land issues in the area," Euan said.

"Ultimately we all have the same goal – to protect lives and property – and this conference can highlight what we're doing to improve our emergency response processes so we can uphold the best possible service to the community."

DSE South West Regional Director Laurie Dwyer said the conference was a good opportunity for staff to get together prior to the fire season.

"By bringing CFA, DSE and Parks Victoria together to consider the season ahead, this conference is an excellent example of putting integrated fire management into practice," Laurie said.

An annual general meeting completed the conference, with a presentation of the proposed 2011-14 Wimmera Fire Operations Plan. ■



AMY SCHULBERGER

AMY SCHULBERGER

DANDENONG'S SOCCER SUPREMACY

In late August Dandenong brigade members played soccer against a group of teenagers as part of a disadvantaged youth program.

The Big Issue Australia's Community Street Soccer Program uses sport to engage homeless and marginalised people and promote social inclusion.

The teenagers get together once a week, train and play matches. The program provides a soccer coach and playing equipment.

Support staff also work closely with players, linking them to services that help them to overcome their homelessness, substance abuse, family breakdown, grief and mental illness.

Dandenong Qualified Firefighter Lachlan Ross was approached by the Big Issue program to take part, and Senior Station Officer Glenn Proebstl saw it as an opportunity to create a greater bond between CFA and the community.

"There seems to be this stigma that men and women in uniform are unapproachable. I hope that today we were able to help break that barrier and give them some hope and inspiration," Glenn said.

"These teenagers are capable of being firefighters or police officers – or whatever they choose to do in life. They just need to be reminded how valuable they are," Lachlan said.



Dandenong fires and Victoria Police played several games of soccer with the teenagers before enjoying a well-earned sausage sizzle.

The results of the matches weren't important, but our Dandenong boys won all their games. ■

Right: Dandenong fires played soccer to strengthen their bond with the community



ROHAN SHORT

BANGHOLME TAMES TIGERS

CFA members put the Melbourne Tigers basketball team to the test at a secret training session at our Bangholme training centre in early September.

The players received an email the day before the session asking them to meet at Bangholme, dressed in old clothes. With no further details, some of the boys thought they were in for a game of golf.

But the players soon discovered it would be more demanding than a stroll around a golf course. The training session started in a classroom, where Boronia brigade Leading Firefighter, James Wong, explained that firefighters need many of the same skills as elite basketball players – in the areas of communication, problem solving, leadership and team work.

The 12 players were then divided into two teams of six. Their first scenario was the ‘temple of doom’. This was a search and rescue exercise where three men stayed outside the structure and communicated with the three inside via radio. Inside, the three-level structure was filled with smoke, there was no light, and the team had to find the dummies using their sense of touch while also communicating to the men on the outside, who drew a map based on their descriptions.

The second scenario was ‘rundle manor’. This is a tunnel with confined space where the teams were told there were reports of two missing people. Using a lot of rope work and crawling, the men found three dummies in the tunnel. This was part of the plan to emphasise an important message – don’t give up, keep persisting.

James thought the day was very successful and that both CFA and the sportsmen had gained a lot from the session.

“It was a unique experience for me and CFA. We’ve done a lot of work with the community, sporting clubs and schools – but never with a professional sporting team,” James said.

“So many of the skills they require relate to firefighters so it was great to put the players into an unfamiliar environment and face them with difficult decision-making, strong team work, trust and communication,” he said.

To show their appreciation, Melbourne Tigers gave Bangholme a signed basketball.

Thanks to Leading Firefighter James Wong, Leading Firefighter Tim McKern, and Qualified Firefighter Daniel English (all from Boronia brigade), Structural Instructor Peter Brown (CFA Bangholme Campus), and CFA staff John Bell and Leona Latcham. ■

ALEXANDRA GROUP HOSTS FORUM

An information evening at Alexandra gave more than 100 participants from seven agencies the opportunity to get together and gain insights from top emergency services leaders.

Personnel from DSE, Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria, Parks Victoria, the Red Cross and the Shire of Murrindindi heard presentations by Chief Officer Euan Ferguson, SES Director of Operations Trevor White, and Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority (ESTA) Customer Services Manager Peter Sharman.

CFA members from Yea, Alexandra and Mansfield groups also attended the event, held at the Alexandra Shire Hall.

Euan Ferguson described how CFA would manage a large bushfire under Mission Command, speaking about leader’s intent and local command and control.

Trevor White spoke about issues raised by this year’s floods, SES’s expanding capacity and the cooperative approach by emergency services.

Peter Sharman (who’s also a member of Kinglake West brigade) gave a fascinating insight into the role of ESTA, which receives Victoria’s triple zero (000) calls and activates the CFA and SES emergency pager systems.

Alexandra Group Deputy Group Officer (and event organiser) John Munday said the importance of interaction between the agencies could not be underestimated.

“We place a lot of emphasis on the links between agencies in the local area – we all have to work together. It’s important that we’re all familiar and comfortable with each other and have a strong level of trust,” John said.

Attendees also visited local radio station UGFM for an insight into the workings of an emergency broadcaster. ■

IN BRIEF

CFA SUNDAY

More than a third of CFA brigades opened their doors for CFA Sunday on 20 November.

The day was an opportunity for Victorian families to have some fun with CFA and also discuss bushfire safety.

More than 400 brigades offered information about bushfire preparation and local conditions to help people develop or update their fire plans.

Brigade magazine went to print before CFA Sunday, but photos and stories can be found on cfa.vic.gov.au/cfasunday.



RICHARD VANDERMOST

EMPOWERING WOMEN AT CFA

STORY SUSAN SHOWLER

Making an important contribution to CFA isn't all about getting on the back of a fire truck. In mid September women who've shown dedication to CFA and interest in broadening their understanding of the organisation were recognised at the Women and Fire Mentoring Program awards lunch.

Chief Officer Euan Ferguson, who was guest speaker at the event held at Hamilton fire station, congratulated participants and presented them with certificates.

The Women and Fire Mentoring Program is about giving women more confidence to get out there and have a go, showing them the opportunities available in CFA. The program encourages women to participate, develops their skills, and helps them to get involved in the organisation at a level that suits their interests and abilities.

Torquay brigade volunteer and mentee Alison Aphrys said: "The mentoring

program has been very helpful and the mentors have provided some great advice."

"The program had broken down barriers for women in CFA and helped to open up broader roles for women in the organisation," said Hamilton brigade volunteer Rayleigh Vandermost.

Casterton brigade volunteer and mentee Megan Pettingill said she was now ready to help the community.

Mentor Steve Giddens said those being mentored had also been a good sounding board for ideas to make CFA more accessible to women.

Euan believes the program is important because it recognises the role of women in CFA and encourages greater participation. He commended the work done by the local steering committee. ■

TRAINING TEAM'S INAUGURAL CONFERENCE

More than 140 CFA training staff attended a two-day conference in Creswick in late October to prepare a blueprint for the future of CFA's training.

Executive Manager Operational Training and Volunteerism, Lex de Man, said the conference was the first time all training staff had met to discuss the strategic direction of training.

"We wanted to inspire our training staff, to participate in planning; what we need to do, and how we can do it better in the future," Lex said.

"Of course, we'll be consulting our volunteers and other key stakeholders on any changes and how we intend to implement them," Lex added.

The conference focused primarily on the challenges facing the statewide training team. Lex said one of the key objectives of the conference was to generate an understanding and ownership of issues associated with consistency in the delivery of training.

"We also wanted to generate ideas and commitment in developing and implementing solutions and excellence in training; and I think we achieved an excellent outcome," he said.

One of the presenters at the conference was his Honour Judge David Jones, who led the inquiry into the effect of arrangements made by CFA on its volunteers.



DARREN GRENIS-JAMES

The introduction of Mission Command philosophy to CFA was a major topic at the seminar. Chief Officer Euan Ferguson said Mission Command means "a change in our leadership approach and culture with a much greater transparency in decision-making. Adopting the Mission Command philosophy will require greater investment in training leaders at all levels in operational and tactical decision-making." ■

Right: Loddon Mallee Regional Manager Pat O'Brien speaking at the conference

THROUGH THE AGES Wandin

COMPILED BY KEITH PAKENHAM



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Cover: CFA members from Mt Cottrell Group on a training exercise. Photo by Blair Dellelijm.

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