

# BUSHFIRE

## BULLETIN



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Cover photo by Meeka Bailey



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## COMMISSIONER'S FOREWORD

The current Bushfire season will be recorded as one of the busiest. Our volunteers have had to deal with more than eight thousand incidents since July.

The drought conditions that prevail over so much of New South Wales have given rise to a number of large and extended firefighting campaigns. Notable amongst them the Northern Tablelands, the North Coast, the Hunter, the Mid-North Coast, the Blue Mountains and the Hawkesbury Region, just to name a few.

These fires have necessitated crews from many parts of the State having to travel long distances, be away from home and work, and suffer no small degree of discomfort and inconvenience. I suspect strongly that much of the New South Wales community does not fully appreciate the scale of sacrifice made by our Rural Fire Service volunteers and it behoves us all to work to the highest degree of public awareness as is possible.

Our volunteers have done remarkably well this fire season but at no small cost. Tragically, John Overton of the Kanimbla brigade lost his life during an operation on September 21st. We all share the grief felt by his family and friends to whom we again send our heartfelt sympathy and condolences. John's passing, as with those who went before him, are stark reminders of just how dangerous is the job our firefighters do. We must always strive to ensure optimum safety on the fireground and that is a responsibility that we all share.

Whilst more than 35 residential properties have been lost so far this season, countless others owe their survival to the dedication, commitment and professionalism of our volunteers and if things haven't been hard enough thus far, there is little prospect of improvement in the months to come.

If, as has been suggested, this dreadful drought extends into the New Year, I suspect we will face some daunting challenges.

I want to extend my personal thanks to all Rural Fire Service volunteers, staff and those who support them for some truly magnificent results in a very, very difficult fire management environment. I am very conscious of the stresses and strains encountered by our members in meeting the demands of a fire season such as we are experiencing. I assure you that we will continue to do our best to provide as good a balance as we can achieve between the competing demands on our members.

It is timely also to thank our interstate colleagues for coming to our aid during the recent campaigns and to assure them that in the event that we may be able to reciprocate their generosity, we will do so without hesitation.

My wish for you is that Christmas dawns wet and misty and that you all spend time with your loved ones, recognising that you have had little opportunity to do so in recent months.

Thank you all for your outstanding efforts, your commitment to community safety and may I extend to you my wishes for a safe and joyous Christmas... you most certainly deserve one.

Regards

Phil Koperberg





1 GENERAL NEWS



*Photo by Sean Davey*



## MT WARNING – GILBERTS FIRE, EUNGELLA INCIDENT REPORT

Mt Warning, where the dawn sun first touches mainland Australia, was one of the first areas in the State to be affected by this year's early bush fire season.

The fire started on a Eungella private property on the slope of Three Tops Mountain and entered the world heritage listed Mt Warning National Park on Thursday, 5 September.

Although relatively small, the blaze stirred interest as it threatened pristine rainforest and homes, destroyed fruit plantations and highlighted the potential of the upcoming fire season.

"The fire was very erratic and in an area recognised for its natural beauty and environmental importance," Tweed Fire Control Officer, Superintendent Dave Cook said.

"The bush fire danger period had been declared early and we had already attended some other fires but this one caused considerable concern because of its location."

"The Eungella area hasn't had significant rain since last year and was the driest locals had ever experienced."

"Although we lost 60ha of plantations, grazing land and the fire entered the National Park there was not a great deal of damage to the rainforest itself."

Tweed Fire Control Centre put the call to Tyalgum Brigade at 1030, which arrived to find two unnaturally lit fires.

One was burning up the steep slope of Three Tops Mountain through a banana plantation while the other destroyed a mango plantation closer to the Tyalgum Murwillumbah Rd.

Six more RFS fire tankers with 18 personnel were called to assist as concern mounted for properties in Hidden Valley between Three Tops and Mt Warning.

Crews concentrated on property protection for the dozen homes and plantations in Hidden Valley as the fire raced for the settlement.

Containment of the eastern flank was achieved and another banana plantation saved by 2100 hours.

Attention turned to the western flank and a dry rocky ridge to stop the fire's westward spread through National Park.

Volatile, erratic fire behaviour and steep slopes around 36 degrees hampered firefighters' access to the area.

They continued work on containment lines throughout the night and helicopter water-bombing on the ridge began on the morning of Friday, 6 September.

Fuelled by extreme weather conditions and assisted by inaccessible country the fire crossed the dry ridge and began to burn to the peak of Three Tops.

Patrols of Hidden Valley properties began again as the fire threatened to drop over the cliff face into the settlement.

Despite the dry conditions, lush rainforest vegetation formed a natural containment line allowing firefighters to keep the fire to the drier ridgeline of Three Tops Mountain.

Regular surveillance and patrol was still necessary to ensure the safety of Hidden Valley

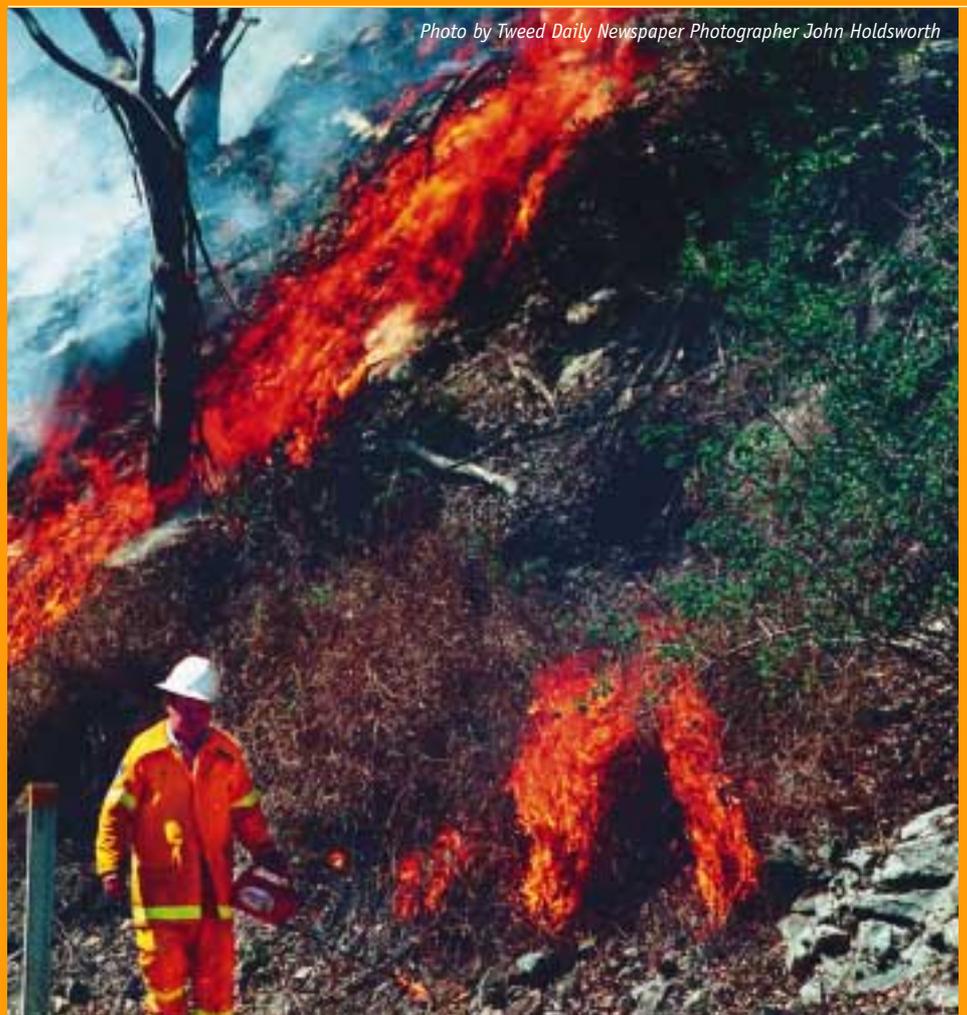
properties.

With the threat to Hidden Valley reduced, focus on day five, Monday 10 September, shifted to property protection for rural residences on Tyalgum Rd, then threatened by the northern flanks of the fire.

The initial urge to light a backburn was checked by the problems posed by steep topography and the need to prevent the fire taking off up the mountain, creating further pressure on the then delicate natural containment line on the southern flank.

In close consultation with NPWS a thorough plan was formulated to protect homes and move the fire away from the heritage-listed area without pressuring the southern containment line.

### VOLATILE, ERRATIC FIRE BEHAVIOUR AND STEEP SLOPES AROUND 36 DEGREES HAMPERED FIREFIGHTERS' ACCESS TO THE AREA.



*Photo by Tweed Daily Newspaper Photographer John Holdsworth*

Photo by Tweed Daily Newspaper Photographer John Holdsworth

It was decided to wait for the fire to creep down the hill, almost reaching properties along Tyalgum Road, before starting the backburn.

The backburn took place precisely at 0610 on Monday 10 September and “went like clockwork”, Supt Cook said.

As the fire approached the nearest homes a highly coordinated 6km backburn was lit easing the threat to properties by late evening.

By day 8, Thursday 13 September, the fire was contained along Wollumbin Creek and by the wet forest on Three Tops Mt, enabling NPWS and RFS to further consolidate containment lines by mopping up and patrolling.

Monitoring and patrolling continued for three days before the fire was declared out on Monday, 16 September.

About 740ha of land was consumed.

At the height of the fire seven RFS tankers with 35 personnel, two RFS command vehicles, one NPWS striker, one helicopter and one SES unit were involved.

**Story by Meeka Bailey**



## SERVICE IN THE PRIME WITH NEW PARTNERSHIP

The NSW Rural Fire Service has recently produced four television commercials worth a total of \$20,000 using a cash donation from Prime Television.

The commercials are an integral part of a joint community education campaign teaching the role of the RFS and bushfire safety within the regional and remote areas of the state.

The key messages communicated by the television commercials are that RFS members are part of a volunteer organisation that has been providing the NSW community with fire protection services 24 hours per day for more than 100 years.

To promote the message, Corporate Communications produced and directed four scenarios showing the diverse range of firefighting activities that Service members carry out: grassfires, bushfires, structural fires and motor vehicle accidents.

The commercials were produced using RFS members and were filmed in regional areas including Tamworth, Moree, Singleton and Castle Hill.

Mr Brent Harman, CEO Prime Television, and Commissioner Phil Koperberg, said the community partnership was a logical step for two organisations operating in rural New South Wales and would provide both organisations with a strong community based focus.

Mr Harman added, “NSW Rural Fire Service is a vital and important service to the people of our state and the support of such an organisation is essential to the well being of the communities in which Prime operates.”

Commissioner Koperberg said, “It is vitally important that we as an organisation provide the community with information on how to prevent and prepare for bushfires. This partnership provides the conduit by which to disseminate these messages. It will be extremely beneficial to both us and the community.”



## THE ROCKS BUSHFIRE APPEAL THANK YOU



Dear Assist. Comm Trevor Anderson, On behalf of the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority, thank you for attending the cheque presentation ceremony and morningtea on 12 April. It was great to see you there.

Our tenants were pleased to have been recognised and commended for their contribution to the Premier’s Bushfire Appeal, and to have you, as a member of the Appeal Committee, to accept their cheque.

Yours sincerely

**Greg Robinson**

**Chief Executive Officer**

**Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority**

## MEDOWIE BRIGADE 'SIGNS ON'

Medowie Brigade, north of Newcastle, leads the way in station signage with the its new building sign put up on 5 August 2002.

The sign is the first of its kind to carry the new corporate tagline... "for our community" and clearly identifies the station as belonging to the NSW RFS.

"We wanted the sign to differentiate us from the other fire and emergency agencies in our community so that people would know that we are the RFS," said Medowie Deputy Captain, Jim Sanderson.

The Medowie sign is a credit to the Brigade and proves the importance of written goals.

"The Brigade had been talking about getting a new sign for almost five years, but once we wrote the goal down we achieved it in less than six months," said Jim.

Funds raised through a community trivia night paid for the sign and also provided a surplus of more than \$3,000, which was used on equipment including several Global Positioning System units.

New signage guidelines based on this sign will be developed by Corporate Communications for all brigade buildings across the Service to create a professional and consistent image in local communities.

**Story by Zoë Townsend**



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## FENCE SITTING PAYS DIVIDENDS

The Greater Union Organisation has raised a total of \$30,560 for the benefit of the NSW Rural Fire Service with charity screenings of the Australian film *Rabbit Proof Fence*.

Screened on 13 February 2002, 4312 tickets to the film were sold at a special price of five dollars with all proceeds being donated to the Service.

Following the screenings, Greater Union presented three cheques: one each to the Campbelltown District and Kiama/Shellharbour District, which were amongst the hardest hit in last summer's fires, and another to the NSW Rural Fire Service Head Office.

Director of *Rabbit Proof Fence*, Phillip Noyce said, "the courage that my film highlights and the courage we saw every day from our firefighters makes it appropriate for *Rabbit Proof Fence* to be screened to help raise funds for the NSW Rural Fire Service."

All screenings were sold out at Glendale, Tuggerah, Castle Hill, Macquarie, Shellharbour, Campbelltown, Hornsby, Burwood and Miranda.



## KENTHURST VOLUNTEER BUSHFIRE BRIGADE: 60 YEARS ON AND STILL GOING STRONG

Kenthurst Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade in the Baulkham Hills Shire, north west of Sydney, celebrated its 60th anniversary of community service on 23 March 2002.

Formed during the war years to protect the local community from bushfires, the 40 members of the Brigade aged between 15 and 60 plus years, provide emergency responses to incidents ranging from bushfires and house fires to motor vehicle accidents and storm damage.

"Kenthurst Brigade has assisted at almost every major fire in the Sydney area, from the fires in the sixties through to the Christmas Bushfire crisis last year," said Stuart Frost, Deputy Captain.

One of the great achievements of the Kenthurst Brigade, apart from operational

activities, was the construction of the meeting room over 15 years ago, when members independently raised funds for materials and built the room themselves.

"Like all brigades it's the people that make Kenthurst special," says Bruce Linton, Deputy Captain and Brigade President "they're just a great bunch of people to work with. Over the years the faces change but the commitment and camaraderie stay just the same."



### RURAL FIRE SERVICE ADVISORY COUNCIL



Please Address Correspondence to:  
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ROSEHILL, NSW 2142

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Email: dick.tucker@rfs.nsw.gov.au

24 September 2002

The Editor  
Bush Fire Bulletin  
NSW Rural Fire Service  
Unit 4  
175-179 James Ruse Drive  
ROSEHILL, NSW 2142

Dear Sir

I write to you at the request of the Rural Fire Service Advisory Council. At their meeting on 17 April 2002, Council discussed the 2001/2002 Bush Fire Emergency and the performance of the Rural Fire Service volunteer brigade members over the period of the emergency.

At the conclusion of discussion, Council resolved by way of Formal Minute that the Rural Fire Service Advisory Council recognise the remarkable efforts of the volunteer brigades over the period of the 2001/2002 Bush Fire Emergency and extend to the members of the these volunteer brigades the appreciation and commendation of the Rural Fire Service Advisory Council.

On behalf of Council, I request that this letter be published in the next issue of the Bush Fire Bulletin.

Yours sincerely

  
(R M Tucker)  
Executive Officer

## PLANNING LEGISLATION AMENDMENTS

Destruction of property caused by the Christmas 2001 fires has prompted new rules for building on bush fire prone land.

Some homes lost last December and January were built in steep bush land, lacked defensible areas for firefighters to work with, were hard to access and evacuate or failed construction standards.

These are issues that can be dealt with early in the planning stages of building development.

Changes to the *Rural Fires Act 1997* and *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* dictate that councils must produce maps of areas at risk of bush fire and developers must meet planning guidelines and construction standards that take fire hazards into account.

The Service is responsible for ensuring measures are taken to make properties safer and will review some applications, but councils are still the ultimate consent authorities.

"It is not the intention of the new measures to prevent the development of land in bushfire prone locations," RFS Planning and Environmental Services Manager, Grahame Douglas, said.

"However, in order to provide adequate protection from bushfire it may be necessary to modify the style, construction material or location of a building."

The aim is to reduce the impact of bush fire on residential areas by arming Councils and developers with information on what land is likely to be problematic, design and building guidelines to make properties safer and help applications through the approval process.

Land of concern is generally forest or grassland close to existing or proposed development and includes a buffer zone to take account of ember attack and radiant heat.

Developments more than 100m from the bushland interface do not require any specific bushfire protection measures.

The RFS will generally take an advisory role in the application approval process but is an issuing authority for some developments.

In the case of a proposed, single, residential dwelling to be constructed among existing structures, plans will only be referred to the RFS if bush fire protection criteria are not met.

If the location or nature of the building does not meet the minimum requirements of the guidelines, Councils refer the application to the RFS for expert bushfire safety advice.

The Service will take a more active role in approving sensitive, "integrated developments"

such as aged care, child minding, educational and medical facilities and tourist accommodation by issuing a Bush Fire Safety Authority.

"These developments are highly vulnerable because the people using them lack mobility and that impacts on emergency situations and evacuations," Mr Douglas said.

"We provide special considerations for these developments and these are tight because we do not want to expose children and the elderly to unnecessary stress or risk."

Subdivisions also require a Bush Fire Safety Authority, providing a consumer protection measure for potential buyers who may be unaware the property is in a bush fire prone area.

Building industry concerns about the legislative amendments focus on fears that the application process will take longer and cost more because of RFS involvement.

"If developers comply with bushfire protection the RFS does not need to see plans, council can approve them. If they do not comply then look at them, provide solutions and facilitate approval," Mr Douglas said.

"Only those developments that do not comply need to come to RFS and we will work to the same time frames as councils, generally processing them within 14 days."

Property owners wishing to do external modifications will also be subject to the new planning provisions.

The sale of an existing dwelling will not be affected by the new legislation, however, Councils will issue a Section 149 certificate to identify the property as being in a bush fire prone area and flag the planning issues with potential buyers.

The RFS and PlanningNSW have produced the Planning for Bushfire Protection 2001 guide for designing and building in bush fire prone areas to assist developers.

Councils and the RFS have lists of development consultants for bush fire prone areas who can assist with fire management and planning issues.

Volunteer firefighters will be helped by the amendments, as they require developers to take measures that make properties less likely to be affected by fire and easier to access, evacuate and defend.

Planning for Bushfire Protection 2001 can be downloaded from the RFS website ([www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au)) or purchased from PlanningNSW.

**Story by Meeka Bailey**

### Design and development must:

- > consider provision of refuges and evacuation
- > avoid isolated developments
- > promote good access
- > avoid ridge tops and steep slopes
- > ensure water provision for firefighting
- > use level ground where possible
- > locate habitable building near access/egress points
- > locate services underground.

## CHRISTMAS 2001 BUSHFIRE APPEAL FUNDS

Ten Engadine families who lost their homes on Tuesday 8 October were the most recent fire victims to receive help from the Christmas 2001 Bush Fire Appeal Fund.

Most of the \$11,108,000 donated because of the Christmas 2001 fires has been distributed.

However, enough remained for the Thurlgona Rd and Marooba Pl residents to each receive a \$10,000 Helping Hand Grant within 48 hours of losing their homes.

The Fund provided \$10,892,700 to families, businesses and community groups by 30 September 2002.

A total of 383 Helping Hand Grants were made in respect, households destroyed or made uninhabitable by the Christmas fires or to farm families and small businesses that suffered substantial damage.

Further payments of between \$600 and \$16,200 were given to those most in need.

Applications for assistance were made to a panel of NSW government representatives from welfare, rural and business backgrounds and grants were determined by a points system to reflect the level of need.

Twenty community groups, ranging from sports clubs to religious organisations, children's centres and cultural groups, received \$135,800 for losses including fencing, windows and equipment.

The Office of Emergency Services received \$500,000 to research and enhance the capacity of NSW's volunteer emergency services.

The Fund was managed by the NSW Department of Community Services and remaining money will be placed in the Community Disaster Relief Fund.

**Story by Meeka Bailey**



## RFS LIBRARY – A PLACE TO RELAX, READ, RESEARCH AND LEARN

### The RFS Library – what resources will you find there?

- > More than 3000 publications and reports
- > 600+ videos
- > training resources (OTEN, AFAC, NSWRFSS, etc)
- > media clippings, press releases and transcripts related to Rural Fire Service back to 1991
- > photos
- > journals

### What subjects are covered?

- > all fire-related information – prescribed burning, fire safety education, firefighting, etc
- > environmental planning and management
- > safety, health and welfare
- > legal services
- > management
- > emergency services
- > other relevant subjects

### What services does the library provide?

- > Research assistance – ask the librarian to help you track down the most useful information for your project or report
- > Loans – books and videos may be borrowed by members of the Rural Fire Service, or used in the library
- > Current awareness – new books and journals are on display for a short period and then available for loan
- > Equipment and facilities – for study and viewing videos. There are desks, computers, photocopier, and a TV/video

### Who can visit the library?

All members of the NSW Rural Fire Service are welcome to visit the library for browsing and study.

The library is also open to members of the public by arrangement with the librarian.

### Where is the library located?

The library is located at the Rosehill offices of the Rural Fire Service, 175-179 James Ruse Drive, Rosehill. The library occupies the ground floor of Unit 9.

Visitors are required to go first to Reception, Unit 3, to sign in and obtain a Visitors Pass.

### How to arrange a visit:

Contact the librarian, Barbara Glass, on 88453625, or by email: [barbara.glass@rfs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:barbara.glass@rfs.nsw.gov.au)

### Hours of opening:

Monday to Friday – 9am-4.30pm  
Saturdays by arrangement.

### Brigade visits:

If you would like to organise a brigade visit to the library on a Saturday, or one evening during the week, please contact Barbara to discuss.

### RECENT VIDEOS IN THE LIBRARY

**Gone to Fire: the story of the Australian volunteer firefighters (includes 6 minutes of footage of the Christmas 2001 bushfires).**  
*48 minutes*

This excellent documentary was screened on Channel 7 on 29 December 2001. The Community Education section of the NSW Rural Fire Service had charge of co-ordinating the 2001 Centenary celebrations of the Rural Fire Service. The Centenary culminated in the broadcast of this documentary which utilises historical and contemporary footage.

### Job safety analysis:

**Safetecare series.**  
**Safetecare Australia Pty Ltd.**  
**Melbourne: 2001.**

*15 minutes*  
The job safety analysis is a safety tool to logically examine a particular job or task so that all the hazards associated with that particular job can be identified and, when necessary, suitable control measures can be determined.

**Prescribed burning – planned, effective and safe Victoria Department of Natural Resources and Environment. 1998.**

*29 minutes*  
This training video provides information on low and high intensity burning; planning for a burn; burn objectives; details required in the burn plan; safety aspects; ignition devices and perimeter control.

### WEB SITES TO SEE

<http://www.apfmag.com/index.htm>  
**ASIA PACIFIC FIRE (APF)**

This is a quarterly trade journal for the fire protection and firefighting industries dedicated to the Asia Pacific countries. You will find the latest in new technologies and codes and standards on this site.

### Within the site you will have to access:

News – The latest developments in the industry as they happen, plus direct manufacturer hyperlinks

Articles – A fully archived library of technical articles from each issue of the hard copy magazine

What's On – A breakdown of the major global events for the Fire Protection & Fire-Fighting industries in the Asia Pacific regions

<http://ausfire.com>  
**AFAC NEWSLETTER.**

This is the monthly newsletter of the Australasian Fire Authorities Council. It contains a wealth of information about developments and happenings in fire management in Australia.

<http://www.firehouse.com>  
**FIREHOUSE**

This is a great site with heaps of information about firefighting in the US context.



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## SYDNEY CONVOY FOR KIDS

On Sunday 25 August two hundred NSW Rural Fire Service members from the greater Sydney area and surrounds volunteered to work on the 2002 Sydney Convoy for Kids. This year the convoy raised more than \$65,000 for the Children's Hospitals in Westmead and Randwick, and Careflight.

More than 600 trucks including 43 RFS vehicles formed the convoy at Huntingwood, in western Sydney at 2.30 am and then proceeded to Sydney Olympic Park at Homebush via the M4 Motorway. All vehicles were in their allocated parking spaces by 9am.

RFS members played a major part in the planning, organisation and running of the convoy and activities at the Homebush Bay site, with brigades from Empire Bay, Lake Macquarie, Wingecarribee, Wollondilly and Wollongong taking part.

"NSW RFS is the backbone of the convoy, the amount of work they put in year after year is phenomenal," said Kerry Mannix, Secretary

of Sydney Convoy for Kids.

Wingecarribee and Lake Macquarie catering crews excelled themselves in the preparation and distribution of food and drink.

Blue Mountains and Blacktown Communications Groups provided the communications infrastructure to ensure that the day ran smoothly.

RFS firefighters assisted in running the children's games, although at times it was hard to see who was having the most fun. There was also a colouring-in competition, run by Rooty Hill Brigade. RFS personnel also helped with the auction, various stalls around the complex generally pitching in and lending a hand when the convoy committee needed it.

Special thanks should go to key planners in the convoy: Greg and Sandra Frullani of the Blue Mountains Woodford Brigade; Peter Hyett, Deputy Captain of the Rooty Hill Brigade; Ian Mann (Comms1) from the Blue Mountains, Ron Freeman (Comms 1) from the Cumberland Zone (Blacktown Fairfield Penrith) and Ralph Jenner (Comms 2) from the Cumberland Zone.

**Ted Williams**  
**Inspector, Cumberland Zone.**



## BUSINESS CONTINUITY MANAGEMENT

As an emergency service the RFS is familiar with all aspects of major incidents and disaster situations. The disruption and destruction of the Christmas 2001 fires, and incidents such as September 11 in the US, raise the question as to what would be the consequences to the RFS if a major incident or disaster occurred on Service premises?

While Australia is relatively free of terrorism, major incidents do occur in our workplaces, causing disruption or loss. Sometimes they ultimately result in the closure of organisations and almost nightly, the TV news shows one or more businesses suffering from fire or other damage. Some relatively recent local examples are:

- > Bankstown City Council Fire – Sydney
- > Building Fire – NSW Bowling Club Hunter St. Sydney
- > National Crime Authority Office Bombing – Adelaide
- > Sydney Hailstorm
- > Longford Gas Plant Explosion – Victoria

Each of these incidents caused disruption and loss to one or more organisations and in some cases complete organisational failure. Of those that have recovered, most have had some sort of protective process in place, bearing in mind that all organisations are vulnerable to the impact of external events that are reckoned to be beyond their control.

What is it that enables some to survive and others to fail? The answer is Business Continuity Management (BCM). It is the establishment of back-up and contingency systems to ensure that an acceptable level of service can still be provided even if an organisation falls victim to unforeseen disasters.

The Service is undertaking a major project to implement a BCM process that will incorporate the planning for redundancy and recovery of both the technology resources (traditionally known as Disaster Recovery Planning or DRP) and the business processes that are undertaken (or Business Continuity

Planning or BCP).

The Information Services section is designing the implementation of the DRP process to ensure continuing availability of the Service's IT hardware and software infrastructure requirements. This work will complement the next project that will review, update and implement the BCP process.

There are various stages in the development of the BCP:

- > An analysis of the business processes to validate/recognise the dependencies and priorities
- > Development of a selected recovery strategy or strategies to facilitate the recovery of the prioritised business process, within agreed timeframes
- > Development of plans that detail the how – where – whom – when for the recovery of the specific business processes
- > Exercise of plans to become familiar both with their content and the required

## HEALTH & SAFETY

Policies to protect Service members from injury and illness as they work on firegrounds, in stations and at fire control centres, are now a priority due to changes to NSW legislation.

Brigades, Districts and Regions must now assess all their potential workplace hazards, create their own health and safety treatment plans and involve members in this process.

Under the new Occupational Health and Safety Act and Regulation, an employer has a duty to consult with personnel and must use risk management methodology to identify and assess hazards then prioritise and treat the risks.

“Risk management planning methodology is not a new concept for the RFS, we use it for bushfire planning, but we can also apply it to the health, safety and welfare of our people on the fireground and at work,” RFS Safety and Welfare Manager, Jan Rashbrook said.

“While health and safety practitioners have adopted this approach for many years, the new legislation spells out the absolute requirement for organisations to employ risk management principles throughout every aspect of their

business.”

“For the RFS that means everything from driving a fire tanker and undertaking a prescribed burn to answering radio communications or cleaning a fire control centre.

“This is a very exciting period for health and safety because volunteers and staff will be involved in producing the policies that affect them.

“They will help identify the workplace problems they face and the treatments that are needed and best suited to their requirements.”

The RFS is drafting a Health, Safety and Welfare Risk Management Policy to help each area create their health and safety documents and plans by providing templates and advice.

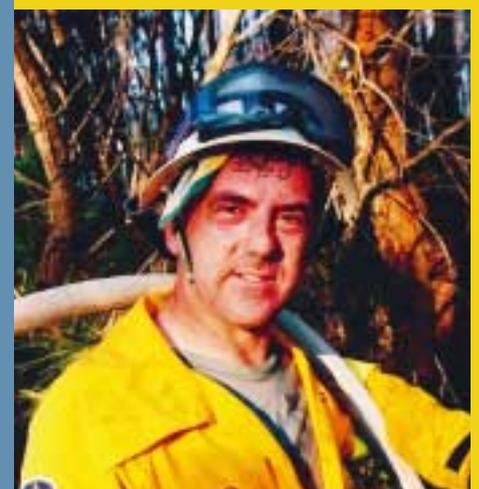
“The RFS is committed to a pro-active approach to managing health, safety and welfare at the workplace and will maintain a system to support the identification of hazards, and the assessment and treatment of all work-related risks,” Ms Rashbrook said.

The draft policy will be presented to the Health and Safety Committee and other

consultative bodies before submission to the Policy Unit and should be available early next year.

**Story by Meeka Bailey**

*Photos by Adam Hollingworth*



recovery process. These exercises can take various forms from a desktop walk-through to a full-simulated disaster.

The end result will be a fully documented business recovery process in a series of living documents that will be regularly reviewed, exercised and updated to ensure that they remain relevant for the needs of the Service’s various business areas.

During 1999 many organisations around the world worked and planned to prevent any impact from the Y2K bug. The Service identified key processes and introduced some limited contingency planning to counter the impact of any outage that may have occurred. Despite the hype and excitement we all know that Y2K resulted in little or no outages being experienced. Nonetheless, the groundwork laid and the work done will be reviewed for the BCM program and refined it to make it appropriate for current recovery needs.

BCM is not just a one-off process that is

implemented and then forgotten. Rather it is a changing and evolving management practice responding to organisational change. Following the initial cycle of analysis, strategy and planning documentation, there will be a series of rehearsals to validate the assumptions made in the plan, and to familiarise those responsible for managing the organisational requirements of the plan with their responsibilities. These rehearsals should identify changes and improvements to the plan. Full reviews would occur every two years.

The benefits to the Service will be significant. It will be more resilient to the impacts of major incidents and disasters and better prepared in all areas. Most importantly BCP will ensure that the Service continues to deliver the high quality of service currently experienced and expected by the people of NSW.

**Story by Mark Swayne  
Manager, Corporate Planning & Performance**

## CRITICAL INCIDENT SUPPORT SERVICE

More NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) members are dealing with the distressing incidents they attend by talking to the Service's peer support network.

The Critical Incident Support Service's (CISS) team of trained volunteer Peer Supporters helped 2,330 members over a period of 4,500 work hours between 30 June 2001 and 1 July 2002.

The team's activities peaked over the Christmas / New Year bushfire period, when more than 1300 members received assistance through the range of CISS initiatives, such as on-scene and telephone support.

The already comprehensive, 24 hour-a-day service, will be boosted by the appointment of more team members as the 2002 CISS training program nears completion.

"RFS work can be traumatic for those who attend incidents so we are increasing team numbers to ensure volunteers have access to the range of support systems we offer," CISS Manager Paul Scott said.

"NSW is a large State and while we have immediate telephone support the aim is to increase the response time of on-scene support so that our crews have assistance on the ground."

A recruitment drive held last year increased the team by five to 24, and 13 new volunteers are currently in training. Further recruitment is planned for next year.

In addition to on-scene and telephone support, CISS Peer Supporters and trauma consultants provide pre-incident education, post-event individual and group interventions as well as referrals to professional counselling and clinical services.

Services provided by the CISS program are strictly confidential and feedback from members on its effectiveness has always been positive.

"Some people experience difficulty on their road to recovery and it is a joy when we can help someone to process the thoughts and feelings they are experiencing and assist them in their time of crisis," Mr Scott said.

**For general enquiries, education sessions, calls for assistance telephone 1800 049 933.**



## PREMIER'S EMERGENCY SERVICE AWARD

During an awards ceremony on 2 September, 2002 the Hon Bob Carr MP recognised NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) members who achieved excellence in the provision of emergency service.

The inaugural Premier's Emergency Service Awards acknowledged volunteers and staff who went beyond their normal duties in their work for the RFS, NSW Fire Brigades, NSW Police Force, NSW Ambulance and State Emergency Service.

Four awards were presented to the RFS at Government House:

### 1 > State Operations – Unit Award

Effective management by State Operations during the 2001-2002 bushfires saw thousands of firefighters and fire appliances coordinated to save an estimated 20,000 homes. Significant property damage did occur as a result of the fires, however, there is no doubt the losses would have been far greater if not for the effective coordination of all agencies by State Operations. A high degree of essential service planning with other emergency services and support agencies was achieved by State Operations. Logistical information and welfare support were provided and the media were handled in a professional manner. The outstanding leadership and managerial skills of State Operations Manager, Chief Superintendent Alan Brinkworth, were noted.

### 2 > Chittaway Rural Fire Brigade

One of the most active units in the State, Chittaway Rural Fire Brigade is extremely reliable in its response to operational requests. Over the past five years the Brigade has averaged between 250 to 300 fire calls per year and is responsible for a 3000 ha area of operation. Because of the station's location close to the F3 Sydney Newcastle Freeway, the Brigade has attended numerous motor vehicle fires and accidents. The most memorable was a petrol tanker rollover fire at the Ourimbah interchange.

### 3 > Captain Colin Noon

Captain Noon and his family saved the life of their neighbour who was struck by a rotating aeroplane propeller on July 6, 1999. Using first aid training learned through the RFS, Captain Noon and his wife Carolyn stabilised the patient while paramedics responded. Captain Noon's daughter, Michelle, guided the ambulance to the remote accident scene. Without the intervention of the Noon family the patient would have died from his severe injuries. He eventually lost an

arm. Captain Noon is an active brigade member and his family also assisted in developing a community education program for their area. He also conducts RFS specialist driving courses for volunteers.

### 4 > Mr Richard Donarski

Mr Donarski developed a particular interest in the design and development of protective clothing for volunteer firefighters as the RFS Manager Engineering Services from 1993 to 2002. He is now recognised throughout Australia and overseas as an authority in this field. He was instrumental in the development of international standards for garments, providing increased safety for firefighters in situations where they would experience high degrees of radiant heat. Mr Donarski presented many papers on protective clothing and convinced agencies to accept the new standards. He was recently seconded to the Australasian Fire Authorities Council to develop national standards.





# INCIDENT MANAGEMENT



Photo by Meeka Bailey



Photos by Sean Davey



In NSW we operate by using the Incident Control System (ICS) for a single tanker incident through to a Class 3 fire. The only difference is that at the single tanker incident the Officer in Charge (OIC) fulfils a multitude of roles including the Incident Controller (IC), Operations Officer (OO), Logistics Officer (LO) and Planning Officer (PO), whereas at a large incident there will be an Incident Management Team (IMT) with many personnel filling these key positions and assistants filling other positions within the functional areas.

ICS we currently use for emergency management had its origin in a military system. It was adapted and refined with considerable success by the Forestry Services in North America as the National Interagency Incident Management System (NIIMS). This system was initially used in Australia in the early 1980s and was eventually formalised as the Australian Inter-service Incident Management System (AIIMS) and was first published by the Australasian Fire Authorities Council (AFAC) in 1991.

The overarching legislation under which we operate is the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act (SERM) 1989, which defines the combat agencies for various emergency incidents and recognises three levels of management, State, District and Local, the latter being based on Local Government Areas. All three levels are required to prepare and maintain a Disaster Plan (Displan) for the prevention, preparation, response and recovery of emergency events. The arrangements outlined in the plans provide for assistance to

the combat agency by other agencies and functional areas.

The NSW Rural Fire Service is the combat agency for rural fires and may be supported by other agencies such as Police, Ambulance, NSW Fire Brigades, State Emergency Services, NSW Agriculture, etc.

Within NSW, under the *State Emergency and Rescue Management Act*, there are two fire combat agencies, the NSW Rural Fire Service and NSW Fire Brigades. However under the *Rural Fires Act* there are two additional fire fighting authorities, the National Parks and Wildlife Service and State Forests, their managed lands being part of the Rural Fire District or the Fire District.

Under the *Rural Fires Act*, the Commissioner is charged with the responsibility of controlling and co-ordinating bush fire fighting within NSW. The Act also provides for the establishment of the Bush Fire Co-ordinating Committee which has the principal responsibility of planning for bushfire prevention and co-ordinated bushfire fighting and, therefore, brings together the four agencies noted above to fight bushfires.

Additionally, the Act also requires the Bush Fire Co-ordinating Committee to establish Bush Fire Management Committees at the local level, which brings together all the local "stakeholders", to prepare the Plan of Operations and the Bush Fire Risk Management Plan for the area.

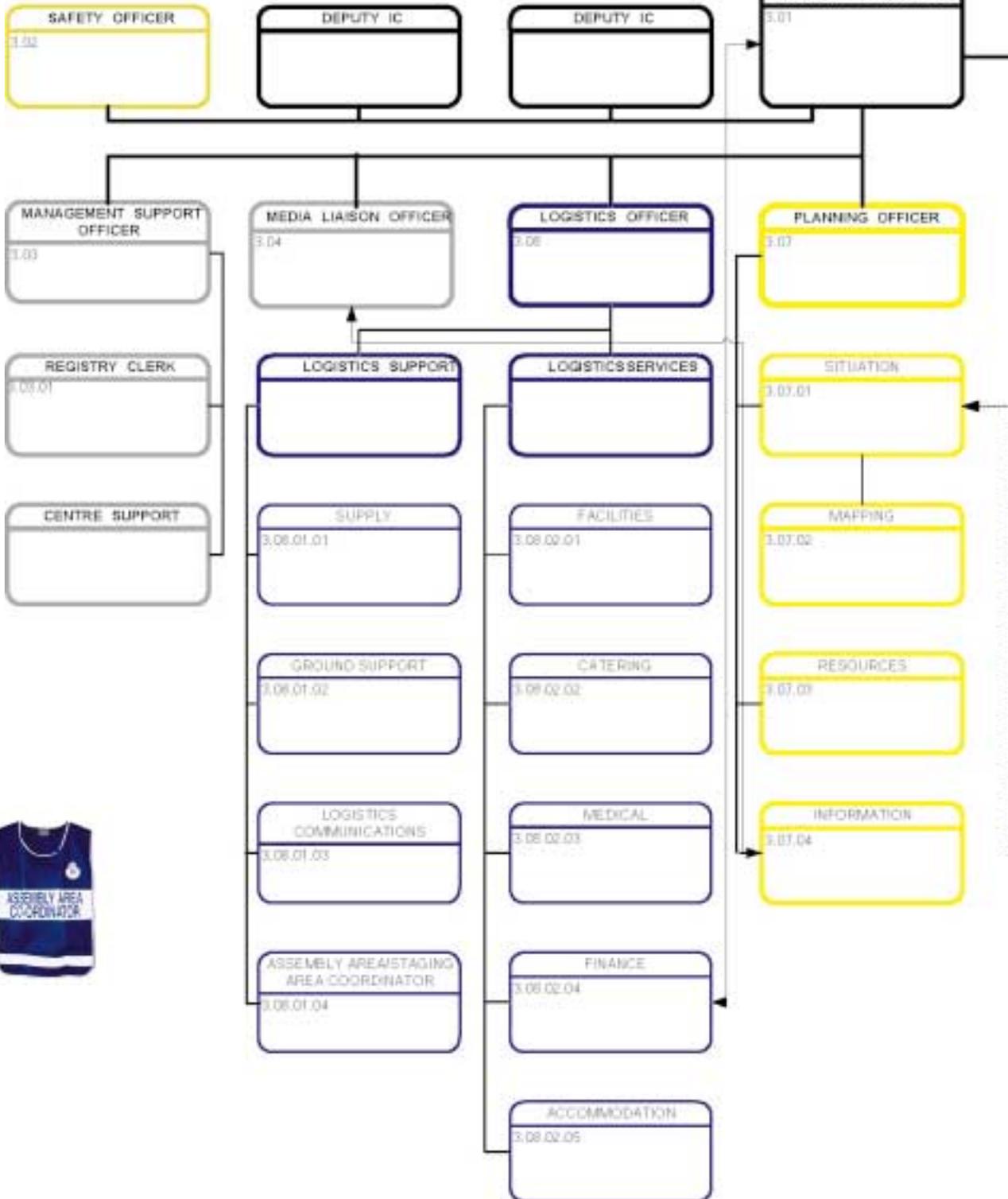
A question often asked is about the classes of fires. A Class 1 fire is a fire under the control of the responsible fire authority,



FIRE NAME	Operational Period (DTG) From.....TO.....
-----------	--



## Incident Management Team



Prepared by: \_\_\_\_\_ DTG: \_\_\_\_\_  
Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_ DTG: \_\_\_\_\_  
Position: \_\_\_\_\_



Operational Management  
2.01 Organisation Structure Chart

Field Command

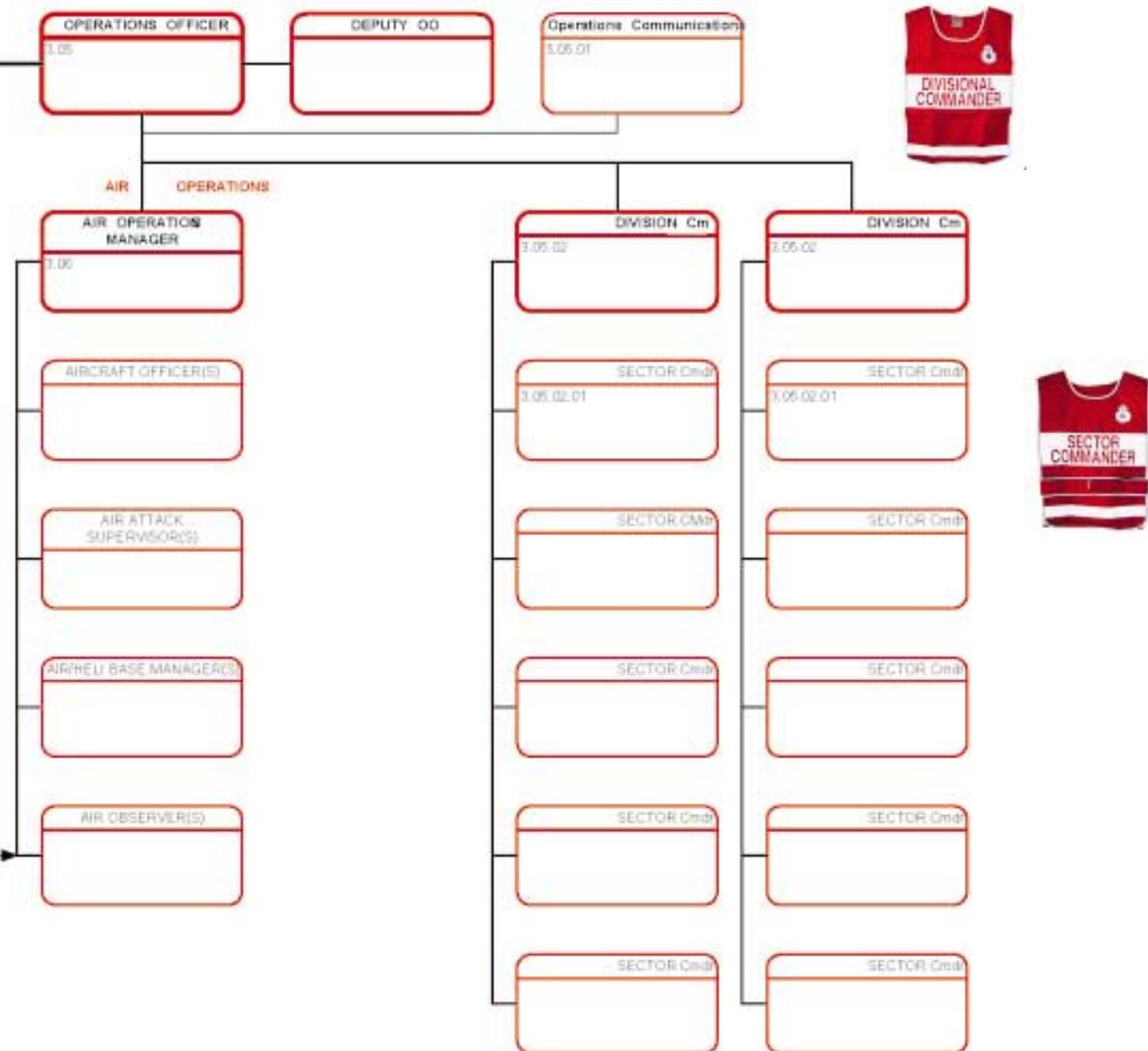




Photo by Adam Hollingworth

whether or not incidental assistance is provided by other agencies. A Class 2 fire is a fire which, by necessity, involves more than one agency and where the Bush Fire Management Committee Operational Executive has appointed a person to take charge of firefighting operations. A Class 3 fire is a major bushfire or fires where an appointment has been made or is imminent under the provisions of Section 44 of the *Rural Fires Act, 1997*.

It will be seen that with this approach, co-ordinated firefighting personnel from a variety of agencies will be working together towards a common goal. It is, therefore, essential to identify the roles within a system, which does not rely upon rank or position but rather the person's ability to perform a function. To this end a series of "Tabards" and "Brassards" of various colours have been created to identify personnel within specific roles. The colour scheme is:

- > white for incident control
- > red for operations
- > yellow for planning
- > blue for logistics
- > grey for management support
- > lime green for safety.

One of the key elements contributing to the success of the ICS is the "Span of Five" which relates to the number of groups or individuals which one person can successfully supervise. Each functional area has a number of sub-functions and these positions may be activated if required due to the escalation of the incident.

The concept of the "Tabards" and "Brassards" is that a tabard is worn by the

person filling each key function and a brassard is worn by the person filling each sub-function. The brassard is designed to be worn on a shirt with or without epaulettes and has provision for a card to be inserted identifying the sub-function.

The Incident Controller has overall control of the incident and through effective management ensures that control, command and co-ordination are achieved by the Incident Management Team. There may also be a number of Deputy Incident Controllers to assist the Incident Controller, particularly if it is a campaign incident running 24 hours a day.

The Operations Officer is responsible to the Incident Controller for the combat of the incident, through field commanders, in accordance with the Incident Action Plan (IAP).

The Air Operations Manager is responsible to the Operations Officer for the co-ordination and management of aircraft used for fire suppression, observation and transport of personnel.

The Divisional Commander is responsible to the Operations Officer for his/her division, for the combat of the fire and management of personnel.

The Sector Commander is responsible to the Divisional Commander for his/her sector, for the combat of the fire and management of personnel.

The Planning Officer is responsible to the Incident Controller for maintaining information on the current and forecast fire situation and combat resources, as well as developing the planning components of and assembling the IAP.

The Logistics Officer is responsible to the Incident Controller for the provision of facilities, services and materials in support of the management of the fire.

The Assembly Area/Staging Area Co-ordinator is responsible to the Logistics Officer for co-ordinating the activities at the Assembly Area/Staging Area.

The Media Liaison Officer is responsible to the Incident Controller for identifying the key issues to be mitigated or communicated to the media, affected community and incident personnel. The strategy and all releases, unless of an urgent nature, must be approved by Rural Fire Service Corporate Communications to ensure accuracy, appropriateness and consistency.

The Management Support Officer co-ordinates the administration and information flow within the Incident Management Team (IMT).

The Safety Officer is responsible to the

Incident Controller for the overall health and safety for all personnel involved in the incident.

Another question often asked by both Communications Officers and Catering Officers is why don't they have a tabard as they are seen as key roles within a District? The answer is that within the Organisational Chart it will readily be seen that the Communications Officer fits within the Operations section and would therefore wear a brassard with a card inserted which reads "Operations Communications". Likewise the Catering Officer fits within the Logistics section and would therefore wear a brassard with a card inserted which reads, "Catering"

DTG on the "Organisation Structure Chart" refers to the Date Time Group which uses the two digits for the date and 24 hour time, e.g. 10:51hrs on 15 November, 2002 would be 15 1051. The full DTG would be 15 1051 NOV 02 which includes the date, time, month and year.

Fire Name on the "Organisation Structure Chart" refers to the name first given to the fire and used on the Situation Report (SitRep). As noted above there may be a number of agencies working on a fire and each may be producing SitReps back to their own agency. It is, therefore, imperative that some thought and consultation be given to the naming to ensure that the fire has a unique name to avoid confusion with a previous fire and that all agencies use the same name. Once a name has been established it will be used by all agencies and will not be changed as this avoids confusion and the thought that there are multiple fires.

More information, regarding operational management and the detailed roles and responsibilities within the ICS, is available in the Operational Management Folder, a copy of which is maintained at your District Fire Control Centre.

**Story by Chief Superintendent Alan Brinkworth & Zoë Townsend**



## FIRE PERMITS

The Christmas 2001 fires highlighted the ongoing need for effective hazard reduction to prevent extensive damage to homes and businesses.

The Commissioner now has the opportunity to order essential hazard reductions by all land managers and takes control of fire permits under recent legislative changes.

The changes allow the Commissioner to require private, commercial and Crown landholders to conduct hazard reductions and streamlines the assessment process for less sensitive environments targeted for hazard reduction, including prescribed burns.

The Risk Management Inspectorate (RMI) was recently created to increase the consistency of the hazard reduction process by monitoring the performance of Bush Fire Risk Management Plans (BFRMPs).

### Bushfire Hazard Complaints

Under the new arrangements the Commissioner can consider the need to remove hazards across all land tenures.

This includes private owners and government agencies such as National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), Department of Land and Water Conservation (DLWC) and State Forests.

The RMI ensures BFRMPs are implemented, conducts strategic fire trail audits and manages hazard complaints.

Based at head office and regional centres, RMI field officers will log complaints or requests for hazard reduction, impose orders on landholders and track whether hazard reduction has taken place and was effective.

The inspectorate is currently developing a Strategic Audit Plan for BFRMPs, strategic fire trail audits and a complaints management system.

### Approvals to Burn

The legislative amendments recognise two implementation approvals required before undertaking a hazard reduction.

### Permits:

A permit is a fire safety authority to undertake burning. It is required when lighting a fire in the open during a bushfire danger period or where it may be of danger to a building.

Permits were previously issued by local councils. All permits are now issued by the Commissioner or his delegate in rural fire districts or officers of the NSWFB in NSWFB districts.

Permits must be consistent with the requirements of bushfire risk management plans.

In all rural fire districts the Fire Control Officer (FCO) or Deputy FCO can issue permits.

Other members of the Service may be recommended by the FCO as permit issuing officers. These will usually include brigade officers and existing arrangements will continue.

Public authorities such as the RFS, NPWS and State Forests do not need a permit to light a fire.

Service Standard 4.2.2 and the Permit Issuing Officers Guidelines outline these procedures for RFS members and can be found on the Internet under Service Standards.

### Certificates:

The Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificate is the environmental approval for hazard reduction. This is a streamlined environmental assessment process for hazard reduction work allowed for in the new legislation.

Hazard reduction work permitted with a Hazard Reduction Certificate must be consistent with the environmental requirements of the local BFRMP and a Bush Fire Environmental Assessment Code (BFEC), which is currently being developed.

The Code, when finalised, streamlines the number of approvals required for areas of environmental value.

The assessment process will be the responsibility of local government and other land management agencies such as NPWS, DLWC and State Forests. Councils will be responsible for issuing certificates to private landholders.

When the BFEC is finalised a permit-issuing officer will be able to determine whether a certificate or any other approval has been obtained and the suitability of granting a permit.

In the interim, permit-issuing officers should issue permits in line with existing practices, ensuring that safety is the primary consideration.

**Story by Simon Heemstra  
Environmental Officer**

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## US DEPLOYMENT



Australian firefighters battled the worst fires in the United States for 50 years when they assisted with rugged forest blazes in southern Oregon and northern California during the American summer.

Together with 45 other aviation and ground operation experts from Australia and New Zealand, four RFS specialists spent six weeks from August 8 on the Biscuit fire in the Kalmiopsis Wilderness.

Over 7,000 people fought the fires, which burned 199,986ha from July 13 when dry lightning strikes were fanned by high temperatures, low humidity and gusting winds.

Four homes were lost, 18 damaged and 68 people were injured with total costs estimated at US\$150M.

"The protracted campaign in which the US firefighters were involved meant their resources were becoming depleted and we were only too happy to rally and support them," State Operations Manager, Chief Superintendent, Alan Brinkworth said.

"Apart from helping them it was an excellent opportunity to compare the way different agencies operate and to exchange ideas.

"Most of the US personnel have expressed a strong desire to assist in Australia."

Selected for their specialist skills and fitness, the 'Anzac' team included 22 aviation experts, 21 ground operations personnel and liaison officers from firefighting and forestry agencies.

The RFS was represented by Chief Supt Brinkworth, Blue Mountains FCO Supt Mark Williams, Shoalhaven DFCO Inspector Paul Gooley and Wyong DFCO Inspector Shane Geerin.

Team members underwent strenuous physical and medical testing before flying to Boise, Idaho, for a two-day induction at the National Interagency Fire Centre headquarters.

The intense briefings familiarised overseas crews with the Incident Control System, which was very similar to that used in Australia, communications, mapping, personal protective equipment, vegetation, fuel types, terrain, terminology, jurisdictions, weather and fire behaviour.

They were then deployed to three base camps and helibases at Lake Selmac, Gold Beach and Brookings to start long shifts in control centres and on the fireground.

"It was very intense and safety was a major focus of all briefings." Chief Supt Brinkworth said.

"The Emergency Management System was very similar to our Incident Control System with some minor terminology differences.

"We were very impressed by the concept of the US Incident Management Teams, their professionalism and their ready acceptance of our assistance and acknowledgement of our skills.

"The high altitude at 2000m, tall trees and long 16 hour shifts over 14 days were the main differences between our US experience and Australian wildfire fighting."

The team came in contact with the legendary Smoke Jumpers, who parachute onto the fireground, and Hot Shot Crews, elite firefighters who walk everywhere in single file, even in steep terrain carrying heavy loads.

Lighter moments of the tour included a cricket match on a pitch littered by gopher holes with a bat fashioned from redwood by a chainsaw.

This was signed by the entire contingent and donated to the National Interagency Fire Centre at Boise, along with a RFS flag and patches, upon the team's departure.

Footy scores featured with a word of the week from Down Under during briefing sessions.

Overseas crews were presented with the keys to Gold Beach, visited local schools, and were treated to a special Father's Day presentation on September 1.

New contacts and ideas gained from the US experience were expected to assist the NSW Rural Fire Service in the future, Chief Supt Brinkworth said.

**Story by Chief Superintendent Alan Brinkworth**

## ABNORMAL WINTER WEATHER KICK STARTS BUSHFIRE DANGER PERIOD

September is NSW's driest and windiest month of year. Normally these conditions are dangerous enough, but when coupled with an abnormally warm and dry winter, September 2002 saw the ignition of bushfires across State resulting in an early start to the bush fire danger period.

The statewide bush fire danger period normally runs from 1 October to 31 March. This year, however, the Commissioner declared the start of bush fire danger periods in northern areas of the State as early as 26 July.

"When recognising the levels of bushfire activity experienced so far this year, the current and forecast weather and the long range prognosis, this bush fire danger period has the potential to be a protracted, difficult season likely to require high levels of sustained resource and commitment from all fire authorities," said Alan Brinkworth, Manager State Operations.

The El Nino phenomenon has contributed to bushfire conditions by making this year's winter the driest in some parts of NSW in more than 100 years.

Dry lightning in late September that provided ignition, but no rain, across the north of the state, resulted in fires in the Severn/Tenterfield district, Hunter Valley and Mid North Coast.

"The ground fuel is so dry that whenever a fire hits vegetation and is fanned by September winds, it sticks," said Rob Webb Senior Meteorologist, Bureau of Meteorology.

NSW RFS has responded to more than 4,900 fires since 1 July 2002.

**Story by Zoë Townsend**



Photos by Meeka Bailey

## EARLY COMMENCEMENT OF BUSH FIRE DANGER PERIOD

Pursuant to Section 82 of the Rural Fires Act 1997, the Commissioner of the NSW Rural Fire Service, following consultation with local stakeholders, declares the commencement of the Bush Fire Danger Period in the following local government areas:

Armidale	Copmanhurst	Kiama	Narrabucca	Sheffhaven
Balinala	Dumaresq	Kempsey	Namabri	Singleton
Barkinstown	Dungog	Kogarah	Newcastle	St George
Barraba	Eurobodalla	Ku-Ring-Gal	Nundle	Sutherland
Bathurst	Evans	Kyogle	Oberon	Talaganda
Baukham Hills	Fairfield	Lake Macquarie	Parramatta	Tamworth
Bega Valley	Gloucester	Lane Cove	Perry	Terrencefield
Bellingen	Gosford	Lismore	Perrin	Tweed
Bingara	Goulburn	Lithgow	Pittwater	Uralla
Blacktown	Grafton	Liverpool	Port Stephens	Walcha
Blue Mountains	Great Lakes	Mackay	Pristine Waters	Warringah
Bombala	Greater Taree	Maitland	Quindi	Waverley
Botany Bay	Gunnedah	Manilla	Randwick	Willoughby
Byron	Guyra	Manly	Richmond Valley	Wingecambee
Camden	Haarings	Merriwa	Rookdale	Wollondilly
Campbelltown	Hawkesbury	Mosman	Ryde	Wollongong
Cessnock	Homeby	Mudgee	Rylstone	Woolahra
Coff's Harbour	Hunters Hill	Mulwarrig	Scone	Wyong
Coolah	Inverell	Murrumbidgee	Severn	Yakaloi
Coonabarabran	Jervis Bay	Muswellbrook	Shellharbour	



The local Bush Fire Danger Period in those areas identified above is either already in force or has been brought forward to commence on 1 September 2002. These local variations are an extension to the Statewide statutory Bush Fire Danger Period which commences on 1 October and concludes on 31 March.

During a Bush Fire Danger Period permits will be required for the lighting of fires for the purposes of land clearance or firebreaks. For more information or for permits contact your local Fire Control Centre or Fire Station.

### NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

Unit 3, 175-179 James Ruse Drive Rosehill NSW 2142 Phone: (02) 9684 4411

## BARBEQUES GALORE – NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH NSW RFS

Early 2001 while a LP Gas Cylinder was being filled at the local hardware store, the owner of the cylinder asked the young attendant if he could use the gas barbeque on total fire ban days. The attendant replied with a blank look and said "Sorry mate, I don't know".

Standing close by was David Bryden, the Community Education Officer from Round Corner Brigade, Baulkham Hills District. A great idea was born. Dave thought "why don't we (the RFS) train the staff at places where they could get asked these questions as another way of making a safer community."

Dave took the idea to Mike Donohoe, who was at the time the Public Education Officer for Baulkham Hills District, and together they worked on the idea.

Dave and Mike approached Barbeques Galore who has branches throughout Australia and has a great reputation for selling outdoor recreation camping, and BBQ equipment. Barbeques Galore loved the idea and the project was on the way.

Dave and Mike worked with the Baulkham Hills District Training Officer, Damian Eggleston, to develop the training package that outlined some recent fire history, why we have disastrous fires in Australia, what a total fire ban is, and tips for safe outdoor recreation such as picnics, camping and bushwalking.

In September 2001 the training package was presented to the staff of Barbeques Galore Castle Hill and Hornsby. To launch the new training, a public education display with activities for the kids and a fire tanker was held out the front of the Castle Hills store.

The partnership between the RFS and Barbeques Galore has allowed the fire safety message to get across to the community in another way. There is a hope to expand the fire safety training to other stores in NSW and possibly the rest of the country.

**Story by Damien Eggleston**



## MEDIA ON THE FIREGROUND

RFS Corporate Communications has embarked upon a very active campaign of training members of the media (eg. journalists, camera operators, photographers, etc) in bushfire safety, bushfire behaviour and the operations of the RFS.

It is important that you are aware of this program, as it will affect your day-to-day operations on the fireground.

The training program is designed to give attendees from the media:

- > A clear understanding of the role of the NSW Rural Fire Service at various incidents
- > A basic understanding of fire behaviour (especially bushfires)
- > A basic knowledge of proper safety precautions to take when around fire related emergencies
- > A basic understanding of survival techniques should problems occur in the bushfire environment

Our goal is for the media to:

- > Promote volunteer firefighter's activities
- > Inform employers of activities and encourage their support
- > Ensure reporting by media is accurate
- > Inform the public of situations for their safety

Having completed the training, we are encouraging the media to outfit themselves in Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as shown in the photos accompanying this story.

The purpose of wearing the PPE is to ensure that the media are readily identifiable on the fireground and also appropriately attired to maximise their safety. It is not the purpose of the training or the issuing of PPE to see media being placed into more dangerous areas – rather it is to minimise their exposure to danger (i.e. provide a safe working environment).

This is especially important in a bushfire where an area that was originally thought to be safe may become dangerous due to erratic fire behaviour. It is also important to recognise that the media may find themselves in bushfire situations where they are not supervised by an experienced firefighter and may not be aware of the extent of danger around them.

Members of the media who have completed our training will also begin to be issued with ID cards. The ID cards will assist RFS members in identifying those members of the media who are appropriately trained to be escorted onto firegrounds. For our own protection, media being taken near fire activity should have been appropriately trained and kitted out. The ID card is NOT an access card and gives the media no additional right to enter a fireground – this remains at the discretion of the Incident Controller.

This training program has already seen the RFS train over 300 members of the media. We have already covered the entire northern area of the State and the Greater Sydney area. Further training will roll out in the coming months to the Hunter, southern and western areas.

Media and Media Officers will become an increasing presence on the fireground. Note the important distinction: the photo shows an RFS Media Officer (either a member of staff or a volunteer Local Media Officer) – distinguished by the black stripe on yellow helmet, regular RFS PPE with "Media Officer" on the back of the PPE or a Media Officer Tabard. The clothing for a member of the media (i.e. NOT an RFS member, but employed by a media outlet such as a TV station, radio, newspaper, etc – people such as a journalist, camera operator or photographer) is a yellow helmet with the word "MEDIA" on either side of the helmet, yellow PPE without any striping and the word MEDIA on the placard on the back where Rural Fire Service is normally seen on our PPE (i.e. NO RFS identification).

Service members who are interested in working on the media side of Incident Management Teams should express their interest in the Local Media Officer program by registering through the RFS website – [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au) – then go to News and Media and select "Local Media Officer EoI".

This program is delivering significant benefits for the RFS in increasing the community's understanding and awareness of our role and our activities in protecting the community.

**Story by John Winter**

## CRIME STOPPERS

Arsonists are the target of a partnership between NSW Crime Stoppers Ltd and the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS).

Members of the public will be encouraged to help arrest and prosecute arsonists by providing information to police through the Crime Stoppers program.

The program is a response to the Joint Select Committee inquiry into the 2001-2002 bushfires, which found arsonists made a significant contribution to the Christmas blazes.

Lack of information from the public was a major problem for police investigating the Christmas fires through Strike Force Tronto.

One small detail can make the difference between achieving an arrest and an arsonist remaining free to light fires again.

The RFS – Crime Stoppers partnership will educate and encourage the public to provide any information that will assist in the arrest of arsonists.

Crime Stoppers is an important communication link between police and the community that allows the public to make anonymous, confidential reports using a free call number.

RFS members will assist in promoting the 1 800 333 000 number by displaying signs, stickers and posters on RFS vehicles and at fire scenes requesting information.

The resources will be distributed to Fire Investigators and rural fire brigades across NSW and be accompanied by a long-term public education program.

Passing motorists, residents or visitors to an area affected by fire are asked to call 1 800 333 000 with information on; details of vehicles such as makes, models and registration plate numbers; descriptions of suspects; and dates and times of suspicious activities.

Callers can remain anonymous if they wish.

Rewards are available for information that leads to an arrest, however, only 10 per cent of callers request a reward. This is evidence of the community support for Crime Stoppers.

Since 1989 police have arrested 2,800 people and laid 8,750 charges due to information received by Crime Stoppers.

The RFS is hoping that Crime Stoppers' new bushfire arson focus will replicate the success it has achieved for the NSW Police Force.

**For further information contact: Community Education on (02) 9684 4411 or Fire Investigation on (02) 4722 3865.**

### Identifying Members of the Media and RFS Media Officers on a Fireground



THIS TRAINING PROGRAM HAS ALREADY SEEN THE RFS TRAIN OVER 300 MEMBERS OF THE MEDIA.



Christmas Message 2002  
By Senior Chaplain Ron Anderson

## “HOW TO GIVE CHRISTMAS GIFTS ALL YEAR LONG”

It's commonly accepted that people should be compassionate during the Christmas season, and it's a sociological fact that they are. People tend to do more, give more, and help others more during the month of December than any other time of the year. Part of the reason for this is that we have more opportunities to help others during this season.

It's good that we're so willing to show compassion during the holidays, but we all know that our acts of compassion shouldn't be limited to just the few weeks at Christmas. We should show Christmas compassion year round. We should give to others year round.

The story of the three wise men teaches us how to give. These principles work 12 months out of the year. So, as you're buying gifts this Christmas you can keep these ideas in mind, and you can also apply them to your life in January, February, March, and so on. In this story there are three principles on giving. Let's take a look at each one. First of all, when you give...

### 1. Give more than you expect to receive

When the wise men came, they knew they weren't going to a "gift exchange." They were going to see a child, a newborn baby. They were visiting a child who was, quite literally, born in a barn. His parents were poor; the possibility of reciprocation didn't exist. And, of course, the wise men didn't care. They came to give, not receive.

I've known of situations where hard feelings developed in families because someone didn't get back as much as they put in. They felt cheated. Understand: when it comes to giving, you can't be cheated. The goal in giving is to give more than you get back.

### 2. Give out of love, not out of obligation.

Have you ever received a gift from someone with the impression that the gift was given more out of duty than desire? And if they really

had a choice, they wouldn't have given you anything at all? Have you ever given a gift with that attitude? That's not giving a gift, it's paying a bill. When you give with that attitude, people can tell.

It's as simple as this: if your gift isn't motivated by love, it doesn't matter what the gift costs, it is worthless. The wise men's gifts were special, not because they were valuable, but because they were given with a heart full of love.

### 3. Give gifts that tell people what they're worth.

In the Bible the Christmas story tells us the wise men came and they opened their treasures and presented Him with gifts of gold, and of incense, and of myrrh.

Interesting gifts for a child, aren't they? What did these gifts mean? According to the customs of the day, gold was the gift for a king; incense was the gift for a priest; and myrrh was the gift for one who is to die – it was used to embalm the bodies of the dead. When the wise men brought their gifts, they didn't come bearing trinkets for a child. They brought gifts that indicated who he truly was – the king of kings, the great high priest, the one who would die for the sins of the world.

When you give, give a gift that says, "I believe in you. You're worth something."

We can't give with the attitude that says, "I'm giving this gift because I'm generous." We must give with the attitude that says, "I'm giving this gift because you're worth it."

The Talmud says, "He who give a coin to a poor man obtains six blessings, but he who addresses him with words of comfort obtains eleven blessings." What does that mean? It means that we should give in such a way that builds up the recipient.

Too often we give condescendingly, and with too many strings attached. We try to use our gifts to manipulate people into doing what we want them to do. We give with the subtle

message: "Now you owe me." This isn't giving, it's bribery. It doesn't build up the one who receives the gift; neither does it glorify God.

The wise men brought valuable gifts because they recognised the worth of who they were visiting. When you give, give a gift that says, "You're worth something to me."

With this Christmas Message I have been talking about how to re-discover the simplicity of Christmas, and it's all been about giving. When we give, we need to give more than we hope to get; we need to give out love, not obligation; and we need to give in a way that communicates to others "You are worth something to me."

One of the greatest gifts God has given us is, each other, our family, and friends. Let's enjoy these gifts; let's celebrate Christmas together.

Our prayer is that your Christmas will bring wonderful memories, your Christmas will be filled with happiness, and your Christmas will satisfy all your hopes and that He will continue to make a difference in each of us so that we will go on making a difference into 2003 and beyond.

An enjoyable and safe festive season to all, and to those who share the Christian faith we wish you a happy and Holy Christmas.

**Ron & Carol Anderson.**



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**President** Steve Yorke  
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**NSW Rural  
 Fire Service  
 Association  
 Incorporated**

After the recent tragic events in Bali it is vital that all members of the Association are aware of the possibility of being involved in incidents, which may be acts of terrorism. Since September 11 the role of the emergency responder has taken on a different focus and all members should consider the way in which we would traditionally respond and approach incidents.

Your personal safety and that of your fellow members is paramount during all firefighting activities, particularly with the unprecedented fire activity currently being experienced across the State and the prolonged drought conditions adding to the severity of the fire season.

On behalf of all members of the Association I wish to extend to the family and friends of Mr John Overton our deepest sympathies. As you may be aware, John was tragically killed while fulfilling his duty as a firefighter with the Kanimbla Rural Fire Brigade in Greater Lithgow.

The Association through the NSW Rural Fire Fighters' Fund and the Rural Fire Fighters' Foundation has established a process to collect donations in order to assist the Overton family.

If you would like to contribute to the appeal please make cheques or money orders payable to:  
**RFFF John Overton Appeal**

To allow the Foundation to send receipts and thank you letters please attach your name and address to your donation and send to:

**Lithgow Rural Fire Service  
 PO Box 294  
 Lithgow NSW 2790**

The Overton Family will gratefully accept any donations.

The RFSA was represented at the recent Australasian Fire Authorities Council (AFAC) Conference by a number of State Council and Executive members.

The Conference was focused on the innovations and best practices for emergency services and featured several international guest speakers who addressed the changing role of the emergency services response practices.

Members interested in obtaining copies of the papers may do so through the AFAC Internet site.

Two new volunteer branches have recently been formed in the Southwest:

Murray-Wakool, around Deniliquin and Lower Western, around Dareton (Wentworth). I congratulate the foundation members for their initiative and look forward to the new branches actively participating the RFSA business and assisting Association members in their areas.

This year's NSW RFS State Championships held at Penrith were a great success with a very high standard of competition, particularly with cadet teams who competed. The Association congratulates all those competitors and in particular those teams that were successful in achieving places in the various events.

The Executive is working diligently on putting a viable financial package together to ensure the RFSA can continue to expand its services to members.

Again I would encourage all members to participate in the Association and raise any issues that you may have with your district and regional representatives.

**Steve Yorke  
 President RFSA**

#### STATE COUNCIL

The State Council met at Wagga in September and endorsed the following initiatives:

- > "That the RFSA approach the Commissioner to encourage his public support for the RFSA by including budgetary provision at the District level to enable cost of postage, correspondence, photocopying and meeting expenses etc. be met from RFS funds"
- > "That State Council supports a trial membership scheme in Baulkham Hills District including issuing a badge using the District name."
- > "That the issues relating to cost effective Radio Communications be referred to the Communications Committee for advice."
- > "That in view of the Linton inquiry findings, the RFSA request the RFS to set up a "Safer Firefighting Steering Committee" consisting of firefighters, legislators, prosecutors and

coronial officers with volunteers represented by the RFSA. The Committee should focus on safety on the fireground, how to achieve proper accountability and education of the legislators, prosecutors and coronial officers."

#### DATES TO REMEMBER

State Council and Executive Meeting  
 23 November 2002 Narrabri

State Council and Executive Meeting  
 15 March 2003 Wollongong

RFSA Annual General Meeting  
 14 June 2003 Bathurst

#### Looking after our volunteers

Volunteers are encouraged to give their feedback on a draft volunteer charter, which aims to protect volunteer rights in decisions made by the NSW government and the Service.

The charter is an overriding statement about what the volunteers provide to the Service and forms a framework for how the NSW government, Service and Association relate with each other to promote the well-being of the volunteers and the community.

Following member feedback, the charter will be ratified at the next State Council and Executive Meeting in Narrabri.

The draft volunteer charter can be accessed on the RFSA website at <http://www.rfsa.org.au/news/charter.html>. Please send your feedback to Steve Yorke.

#### HAVE YOUR SAY

Please forward any comments or issues to:  
**Steve.Yorke@rfs.nsw.gov.au or  
 bindene@tig.com.au**

CUT OUT AND LAMINATE THIS FIRE INVESTIGATION CHECKLIST. KEEP IT ON THE VISOR OF YOUR BRIGADE VEHICLE



## NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE FIRE CAUSE AND ORIGIN CHECKLIST

TO ASSIST WITH THE INVESTIGATION OF WILDFIRES, CREWS NEED TO PROTECT THE AREA OF ORIGIN (SEE FIRE INVESTIGATION SOP'S)

- 1 >**
  - > Secure and cordon off the area or origin plus 10 metres adjacent with tape or rope
  - > Conduct minimal fire suppression activities
  - > Use minimal water - don't drag hose over area - don't drive or walk over area
  - > Don't allow any person to touch or remove any item in the area or other suspicious item/s found in the vicinity
  - > **Make observations and record (see Fire Investigation SOP's):**
- 2 > Call Receipt:**
  - > Call type (telephone / alarm / other)
  - > Date and time call received
  - > Caller (name, address, phone number)
  - > Type of fire
  - > Location
- 3 > En Route to Fire:**
  - > Note smoke colour, number of columns & weather conditions
  - > Observe and record suspicious people (height, build, hair colour, sex, distinguishing features)
  - > Observe and record suspicious vehicles (make, model, colour, registration number, number of occupants, distinguishing features)
  - > Looks for and protect tyre, foot, hoof prints etc)
- 4 > On Arrival:**
  - > Note smoke, flame colour & size of fire (breadth, depth and height)
  - > Location of greatest fire activity
  - > Number and location of seats of fire
  - > Look for and protect wheel, foot, hoof prints
  - > Look for and protect suspicious objects
  - > Observe and record suspicious people and suspicious vehicles



Forward all information to your FCO who will liaise with the Regional Operations Officer via State Operations to determine if a formal investigation is required.



**STRUCTURAL FIRES** > PRESERVE THE POINT OF ORIGIN AND TAKE NOTE OF THE FOLLOWING:

**1 > External**

- > External fire sources
- > Evidence of forced entry (who, when, where)
- > Evidence of tyre / foot prints
- > Suspicious containers (type, location, preserve, protect)
- > Electricity and gas (connected, on / off)

**2 > Internal**

- > Doors (type, open / closed / locked)
- > Windows (type, open / closed / broken)
- > Evidence of forced entry

**MOTOR VEHICLE FIRES:**

**3 > Take note of:**

- > Vehicle (make, model, colour) & registration number
- > Doors and windows (open / closed / locked)
- > Is it suspicious? Seats and trim in place? Original wheels and nuts in place? Stereo in place?

**WHEN DOES A FORMAL INVESTIGATION TAKE PLACE?**

**Does the fire involve –**

- > Death/serious injury to a firefighter / member of public?
- > Significant damage / destruction to an appliance / property / stock / produce / crop etc?
- > Declaration of a s44 appointment?
- > Deliberate ignition – is it one of a series of deliberately lit fires in this area?
- > A structural fire where the cause is unable to be determined?

**YES**

- > Incident Control informs FCO
- > FCO advises State Ops
- > State Ops advises Regional Ops Officer
- > Reg Ops Officer arranges for a formal investigation

**NO**

- > Any other info should be forwarded to your FCO





# 7 VOLUNTEER RELATIONS

The needs of volunteers will be the focus of the newly created position of Manager Volunteer Relations and its first office holder, Martin Surrey.

A member of Heathcote Headquarters Bigade for 18 years and its current Captain, Martin is now based at Rosehill as a communication point for NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) volunteers.

He will provide feedback from volunteers on organisational issues to the Service's management groups.

"My most important responsibility is to talk to volunteers to gather information on the issues they face in order to present them to management," Martin said.

"I will also be assisting Regional and District staff where necessary to strengthen working relationships with volunteers."

He will be visiting all Regions to analyse their volunteer numbers and investigate ways to retain and boost membership.

"To get the best outcomes for this project I will be asking for interested volunteers to join focus groups and together we will develop strategies that best meet the needs of local communities."

The position also involves working closely with the Rural Fire Service Association and other volunteer based emergency services to ensure the RFS has the best possible information network and promote volunteerism.

Members are encouraged to contact Martin with questions regarding Service issues while observing their local communication policies.

**Email:** [martin.surrey@rfs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:martin.surrey@rfs.nsw.gov.au)

**Tel:** 02 8845 3714 or 0418 645 839.

**Story by** Meeka Bailey



*Photos by Adam Hollingworth*



Rural Fire  
Service Approved

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T-Shirt - White(W), Navy(N)	\$18.00				
Sloppy Joe	\$29.00		Navy		
SPECIAL! 12 or more garments, Brigade name embroidered under logo for FREE!					
<b>AVAILABLE SIZES</b>	S M L XL XXL 3XL - 6XL		For large orders please add clearly printed lists as required		
	90 95 100 105 110 115 - 130 (Add \$2 per garment)				
Brushed Cotton Cap <small>(25+ Caps \$8.00 ea., 100+ Caps \$7.50 ea.)</small>	\$8.50		Navy		
Large Kit Bag Individual/Brigade names <small>(printed on seperate sheets)</small>	\$45.00 plus \$8.00		Navy	Length 93cm Height 33cm Width 31cm	
Medium Kit Bag Individual/Brigade names <small>(printed on seperate sheets)</small>	\$35.00 plus \$8.00		Navy	Length 50cm Height 30cm Width 20cm	
<b>Plus postage &amp; packing per address</b> <i>(Includes badges if part of order)</i>					<b>6.60</b>

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Note: Red on Navy background badges are also available.

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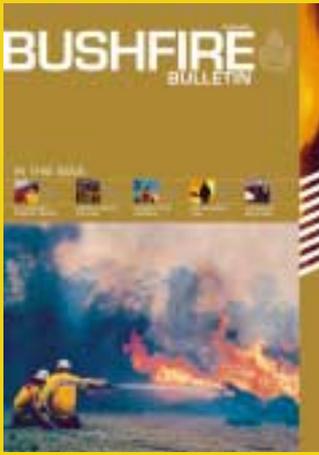
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