Are you bushfire prepared?

PREPARE.ACT.SURVIVE.

Tomorrow’s Queensland: strong, green, smart, healthy and fair
Assistant Commissioner's Message

Statistics reported in the last edition of the Bulletin provided clear evidence of the magnitude of the 2009 fire season where unprecedented fire activity was experienced across most parts of the state, predominately along the eastern coast and extending inland to a degree.

This activity was quickly followed up by rainfall that saw many inland and coastal rivers flood with the associated and adjacent lowland areas being inundated for some weeks. This inundation naturally improved soil moisture across vast tracks of inland Queensland and with our warm climate we are now witnessing vegetation growth not seen for some time. Since these flooding rains, occasional rainfall has persisted where in some inland and northern areas of the state we now have increased grass growth and moisture content which has delayed any early mitigation strategies, and combined with extensive frosts and dry westerly winds that commence this time of the year, curing values are expected to increase rapidly over the winter months. The abundant fuel in grasslands over most of inland Queensland will potentially result in high intensity fast moving fires where wide fire breaks may be required to control these grass fires or at least contain their spread.

The current weather predictions suggest the 2010–11 fire season is shaping up to be another busy fire season for us. Our efforts, planning and mitigation focus will also have to extend inland where we are also witnessing fuel loads and fire potential in some locations that we haven’t seen for tens of years. These inland grasslands may be fire fuel, but are also potential feed and fire activity was experienced across most parts of the state, predominately along the eastern coast and extending inland to a degree.

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The current weather predictions suggest the 2010–11 fire season is shaping up to be another busy fire season for us. Our efforts, planning and mitigation focus will also have to extend inland where we are also witnessing fuel loads and fire potential in some locations that we haven’t seen for tens of years. These inland grasslands may be fire fuel, but are also potential feed and livelihood for the property holders for the coming years. With this in mind it is imperative that we engage with and consult these key stakeholders in our planning and mitigation activities so that we are in turn assisting them prepare for the forthcoming fire season.

This season we will roll out the new PREPARE.ACT.SURVIVE. (PAS) campaign which follows our adoption of the revised fire danger ratings and community messaging last October. Extensive work has been undertaken so far and this edition of the Bulletin expands on the components of the overall message. The important take home message that we need to promote is that life is more important than property, and where fire activity is present and on days that are in the upper ranges of the new fire danger ratings, that leaving might be the safest or only option available. Although QPS and QFRS have the legislative ability to impose infringements on people lighting unauthorised fires through to prosecutions if necessary. Localised community education campaigns and teaming up with Crimestoppers to report suspicious bushfire activity will be another proactive option.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge and congratulate Mr. Colin Harch of Summernom along with Mr Ivan Western of Mount Chalmers on being awarded the Australian Fire Service Medal announced on Monday 14 June as part of the Queen’s Birthday Honours list.

Until next time, keep safe and take care.

Steve Rothwell AFSM
Assistant Commissioner Rural Operations
Queensland Fire and Rescue Service

March Bulletin Cover Photo Wins Award

Congratulations to Chris Ison of the Morning Bulletin whose photo won the Professional Category of the 2010 National Emergency Management Volunteers Photographic Competition Awards. Many of you may recognise the photo as the cover shot of the 2010 March Bulletin.
A result of the inquiry into the Victorian bushfire safety messages however, as used across Queensland to deliver Communities (BPC) program has been Steve Rothwell said that since 2006 Rural Operations Assistant Commissioner property should a bushfire strike. protect themselves, their families and actions they can take to help prepare and regarding the threat of bushfire and the to educate Queensland communities

For many years the Queensland Fire and Bushfire Survival Plan should bushfire threaten. your family and your home for the threat of bushfire. • A PREPARE, ACT, SURVIVE, • Advice messages keep people informed and up to date with developments on a fire. • Watch and Act messages advise people to take action to prepare and protect themselves. • Emergency Warnings, which might be accompanied by the siren sound (SEWIS), will be activated to advise that you must take action immediately, you will be impacted by the fire. These messages will be delivered through the existing channels such as broadcast TV and radio. • Firefighters may not be present, as it is likely they will be fighting the main fire front elsewhere. • NSPs do not cater for animals or pets • NSPs do not provide meals or amenities • NSPs may not provide shelter from the elements, particularly flying embers. People with special needs should give consideration to what assistance they may require at an NSP and although QFES cannot guarantee an immediate presence during a bushfire, every effort will be made to provide support as soon as resources are available.

The main purpose of an NSP is to provide some level of protection to human life from the effects of a bushfire. A NSP will not guarantee safety in all circumstances. The following limitations of an NSP need to be considered if people plan to use one as a last resort:

• A Bushfire Survival Plan has failed
• The extent of the fire means people cannot protect their home and their home cannot protect them
• The fire has escalated to an extreme or catastrophic level and “voluntary evacuation” is the only option.

The 2009 Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission Interim report recommended that people need a range of options to increase their safety in the event of bushfire. One of these options adopted by the QFRS is Neighbourhood Safer Places (NSP).

When a bushfire threatens, whether a persons decision is to leave early or stay and defend their property, an NSP should only be used in the event their Bushfire Survival Plan fails. In other words, an NSP is a place of last resort.

An NSP is a local open space or building where people may gather, as a last resort, to seek shelter from a bushfire. Use of an NSP may form part of a contingency plan when:

- A Bushfire Survival Plan has failed
- The extent of the fire means people cannot protect their home and their home cannot protect them
- The fire has escalated to an extreme or catastrophic level and “voluntary evacuation” is the only option.

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- Fire fighters may not be present, as it is likely they will be fighting the main fire front elsewhere
- NSPs do not cater for animals or pets
- NSPs do not provide meals or amenities
- NSPs may not provide shelter from the elements, particularly flying embers.

People with special needs should give consideration to what assistance they may require at an NSP and although QFES cannot guarantee an immediate presence during a bushfire, every effort will be made to provide support as soon as resources are available.

QFRS Rural Operations Mitigation and Education Officers (MEO’s) are currently working with local governments in the identification and assessment of suitable locations for NSPs with authorised sites to be posted on the QFRS website before the 2010–2011 fire season.
BUSHFIRE CRC UPDATE

Fireground Smoke Exposure Management

Firefighting takes place in a complex and dangerous working environment. During bushfires and prescribed burning, firefighters are often exposed to many hazards, including toxic air contaminants from burning forest and grassland fuels. This makes smoke exposure one of the major potential health hazards faced by firefighters, which in turn raises significant Workplace Health & Safety (WHS) issues for fire agencies and their legal obligations to manage operations in compliance with WHS regulations.

Although extensive studies on firefighter exposure to smoke have been undertaken overseas, little information on the potential health effects of bushfire smoke on Australian firefighters was known until the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) commenced its comprehensive research program into the effects of bushfire smoke, the potential health impacts on firefighters, whether firefighting in this environment presents a health risk and if so how it could be managed.

The recently published Reference Guide to Smoke Exposure Management on the Fireground has been published as a Reference Guide that provides detailed information to assist fire agencies in managing smoke exposure on the fireground and contains more in depth information than the Field Guide to Smoke Exposure Management. The reference guide is more relevant to Fire Managers, Fire Planners and Workplace Health and Safety Officers as it provides information for smoke toxics assessment on the fireground and helps understanding the exposure risk assessment process. The content of the document reviews the potential health impacts on firefighters as a result to bushfire smoke exposure, a summary on occupational health and safety guidelines and standards in relation to bushfire smoke exposure, and an assessment of the exposure levels of firefighters to bushfire air toxics.

‘Air toxics exposure and management’ and was a collaborative effort between Bushfire CRC Researchers, CSIRO, Fire Services and Land Management Agencies. The guide contains information to assist fire agencies in managing smoke exposure during fire operations with the aim to provide advice to crew leaders, incident controllers and fire managers so they can quickly recognise high exposure risk situations and undertake mitigation strategies to minimise high exposure.

Smoke exposure on the fireground can be highly variable among individual firefighters and over the duration of a work shift. Further, activities such as patrolling, mopping up, active suppression and lighting operations for prescribed burning or backburning operations can significantly influence individual smoke exposure levels.

Smoke toxics exposure knowledge made it difficult to assess whether exposures to bushfire smoke during prescribed burning and wildfire operations could potentially impact on firefighters’ health. As such, this study looked extensively at the potential health impacts of air toxics in bushfire smoke and provided much needed information on whether firefighting represents a health risk and, if so, how it can be managed.

Field Guide to Smoke Exposure Management

The Field guide to Smoke Exposure Management has been developed as part of the Bushfire CRC project D2.2 ON ‘Air toxics exposure and management’ and provides a quick visual assessment of smoke exposure risk and provides some potential mitigation strategies to reduce impact. Due to the variability in smoke exposure during fire operations the guide provides a range of potential scenarios, based on low, medium and high smoke exposure levels, and offers advice on mitigation measures. This includes wearing appropriate respiratory protection, frequent crew rotations and time limits for smoke exposure for crews. Nevertheless the guide also recognises that in many situations, especially where life and property are threatened, minimising smoke exposure risks are not always feasible.

QFRS Smoke Exposure Management Guidelines

Based on the information provided in the Bushfire CRC Reference guide and Field Guide, QFRS has developed a simple visual reference guide and what actions to consider when exposed to low, moderate and heavy smoke exposure. To get a copy of the QFRS Smoke Exposure Management Guidelines log on to the Volunteer Portal and follow the link to the research section.

For those interested in purchasing the CRC reference guide or field guide – both publications are available for purchase through the AFAC Bookshop at www.afacshop.com.au
While rural fire brigades have become involved in a wider range of activities in recent years the predominant response by volunteers is still what is known as the Level One incident. These incidents are generally of short duration of less than one day and utilise locally available resources. These Level I incidents are most often managed by the local brigade volunteers and are successfully brought to a safe conclusion without issue.

In today’s environment our community expects fire services to operate effectively and efficiently in combating all types of incidents. In response to these expectations fire and emergency services organisations have developed and implemented incident management systems into their operational activities, the purpose being to provide a structured and coordinated approach to combating an incident ensuring the effectiveness of combat efforts and minimising the risk to personnel.

The Incident Management System

In the early 1980’s fire agencies across Australia realised that there was a need to have a system to provide for the seamless integration of activities and resources from multiple agencies to combat any emergency situation. Based on the success of the National Inter-agency Management System (NIMS) in North America, Australia modified NIMS for local use and developed the Australian Inter-Service Incident Management System (AIIMS) now adopted by all of the Australian fire and land management agencies and the Australian Council of State Emergency Services. The Incident Management System (IMS) terminology used by QFRS is drawn from the principles of AIIMS operating effectively for any type of incident, active or predicted and any situation in which emergency management organisations are involved.

IMS is suitable for all single agency and multiple agency incidents, with QFRS using IMS nationally and internationally with operations in fires and incidents in Queensland and when called to assist other states or other countries in a wide range of disaster situations such as fire, floods, cyclones, wind storms, aircraft accidents, hazardous materials incidents and even outbreaks of disease.

IMS promotes effective operations through:
• the use of common terminology
• a structure, which provides for appropriate communication between organisations at all levels
• maintaining the integrity of the chain of command and information systems of particular agencies.

The IMS structure begins with the first response to an incident and develops as the incident grows. The intent is that the operational structure is matched to the incident and is flexible to increase or decrease subject to the needs of incident. IMS structure ensures that at emergency incidents, the 1:5 ratio is set to ensure that a supervisor can effectively monitor and evaluate performance. Increases over this number may impact on the safety of personnel and the efficiency of the operation. This is reflected in the rural brigade’s structure with crew leaders and officers managing sectors at incidents.

For every incident there must be an appointed Incident Controller that is responsible for the effective and efficient use of resources to bring an incident to a successful completion. The Incident Controller must ensure that liaison and information exchange occurs between co-operating agencies while maintaining the integrity of each agency’s command structure.

IMS recognises that to support any incident consideration must be given to four functional areas Control, Operations, Planning and Logistics. During the initial response to an incident, the Incident Controller may perform all of the four functions. However, as the incident grows, and the management functions become more complex and difficult to perform; the functions of Operations, Logistics and Planning are delegated.

As an incident develops the level of management required to combat the incident also increases. In order to effectively manage the incident, an incident controller may start to delegate functional areas of management to assist this process. This will include establishing an Incident Management Team (IMT) with the appointment of an Operations Officer, a Planning Officer and a Logistics Officer depending on the size and complexity of the incident.

Under the direction of the Incident Controller this management team then determines the desired outcomes or objectives of the incident. These objectives are then communicated to all personnel involved to ensure they know and understand the direction being taken during the incident.
Command and Control at a Level 1 Incident

While Level 1 bushfire incidents are common it is important that they are managed efficiently and effectively with the safety of personnel as the number one priority.

QFRS Operations Doctrine uses the Incident Management System (IMS) to manage fire incidents. This provides a structured and coordinated approach, it maximises the effectiveness of combat efforts and minimises the risk to personnel. The IMS calls for the first arriving officer to assume command and take control and to undertake the role of Incident Controller.

Once command is assumed it is important that this is announced. This is best done over the radio or directly to firefighters on the fireground and when providing the initial Sitrep to Firecom. For example:

Firecom this is Illengowan 41
This incident will be known as Smith Street control
First Officer Jones is the Incident Controller

Fireground channel is VHF 11

These first actions taken by the Incident Controller are crucial; they provide a record of who is in control and any other responding firefighters and crews will also know who is in charge, where the Incident Controller is located and how to communicate by radio. The Incident Controller should wear the Incident Controller tabard for easy identification and stay at the control point to make it easy for any others reporting in or seeking information and direction. All responding crews and in some cases other agencies will be looking to the Incident Controller for leadership and direction.

Once command has been clearly announced it is important that the person undertaking the Incident Controller role carries out the duties and does not get distracted into firefighting actions. This can be difficult. The Incident Controller at a Level 1 incident is responsible for all aspects of incident management. That is Operations, Planning and Logistics and importantly the safety of all fire fighters involved at the incident. One of the hardest things to do is for the Incident Controller to remove themself from the physical aspects of the incident and be in a more strategic or management roll. This means giving up the hose or the drip torch to another fire fighter and standing back to gain a better awareness of the whole situation and be able to look at the big picture. This cannot be done if there is a focus on firefighting tasks.

At every incident an Incident Action Plan (IAP) will need to be developed that collects information and determines strategies and tactics to ensure a safe and effective response. This plan is developed by the Incident Controller and starts with a mental process of gathering information and decision making that is communicated verbally to others. Local knowledge is an important aspect of the information gathering and decision making that is undertaken and the formulation of strategies and tactics of an IAP. Incident controllers should engage with and seek input from local landholders and where appropriate involve landholders in the response.

A Tactical Command Kit should be used when the management of an incident develops in complexity past a point where information can be managed mentally. The forms and worksheets of the TAC A kit are specifically designed for use by Rural Fire Brigades. TAC A kits aid the Incident Controller to exercise command and control at an incident by keeping all the relevant information in the one place. This ensures information is readily available to communicate to all parties involved in or affected by the incident and is of assistance when conducting briefings and for providing situation reports (Sit Reps). In addition, the TAC A has a facility to manage the T-Cards of other resources when there are multiple resources on the fireground.

Clear and concise Sitreps must be provided back to Firecom, confirming the location and size of the fire, tactics employed and requests for further resources if required. This allows the incident to be monitored and records the movement of resources. This information is particularly important during a busy wildfire seasons.

On completion of the incident the Incident Controller should make contact with Firecom and obtain the incident number for the incident report (RF14) and complete the report as soon as practicable. Notes should be recorded that may be important from this incident that could be used in a review or debrief of the incident.

Each incident should be debriefed by the Incident Controller, for Level 1 incidents of short duration this is generally conducted informally at the conclusion of the incident. Where a critical incident has occurred, a formal debrief should be conducted by a suitably qualified person. An incident debrief is undertaken to capture relevant information that will enhance firefighter safety, improve operational response and equipment and identify where improvements can be made in service delivery. All debriefs should be conducted using the SIMEACS format.

In summary, if you take on the job of Incident Controller have confidence in your ability and utilise your experience and the skills that you have learnt from the training that you have done. Good incident leadership and direction at a Level 1 incident is necessary so that a professional response is delivered and the impact on the landowner or the community is minimised.

The use of IMS is included in all levels of training with Incident Controller training a significant part of the Crew Leader programme. Specialist IMS courses are available through Rural Operations, if you are interested in attending one or would like more information on IMS please contact your Area Office.
Vesta Validation Project

The Vesta Fire Behaviour Prediction System has been developed as part of the Bushfire CRC Program A—Safe Prevention, Preparation and Suppression and was released to all Bushfire CRC partner agencies originally in November 2007.

To allow an assessment of the fire prediction model and to test its validity in different forest types across several states, the partner agencies then agreed to participate in a series of workshops for potential end-user agencies to demonstrate practical application of the Project Vesta Field Guide for Fuel Assessment and Fire Behaviour Prediction.

The workshops provided participants with the knowledge on how to use the components of the Vesta Field Guide (Fuel Assessment; Rate of Spread; Fuel Moisture Models; Slope Correction; and Spotting Distance). To allow assessment of Vesta using fuel and fire behaviour in various eucalypt forest types across Australia CRC researchers and end users developed a data collection process that would allow validation of the Vesta predictions during the 2009 fire season.

However, due to the difference in fire seasons and fire activity across the states insufficient data was received for a comprehensive validation process. As a result the Vesta Validation project has been extended. It is extremely important for Queensland's Fire and Land Management Agencies to be part of the decision to adopt Vesta in its current form or to provide feedback to Bushfire CRC for further modification prior to nation-wide adoption.

To get more and better data on fire behaviour and fuel structure in the future we are asking for your help. For the rural brigades that have so far assisted in collecting data, we thank you and would ask that you continue your support in the future.

Hopefully, with your input we can obtain enough information to determine where changes or further developments (such as in Eucalypt forests, grassy understory or wetter type forests) are needed. This potentially is an ongoing progress and further monitoring and data collection may be necessary, especially if the model is changed to adopt the differing fuel types and fuel structures.

To help you help us we have placed a standard template for Vesta validation in the Research section of the Volunteer Portal. Alternatively, the forms will be available through your local area office. This form has been specifically designed for Fire Crews. It has been limited to two pages so it can be printed in double sided pad form. Ideally, it would be good to have a copy of the form within a number of fire units to enable basic information to be collated by crews, regardless of fire size.

The Rural Operations Research Unit will collate the data and continue to work with partner agencies and the Bushfire CRC towards the adoption of Vesta.

For more information and updates please check the Volunteer Portal and future editions of the RFS Bulletin.

Appliance Update

The appliance build programme for the 2009–2010 financial year has been completed with ten light appliances, ten single cab and eight crew cab medium appliances delivered. The medium appliances have been constructed on the design introduced in the previous build and have benefited from suggestions and feedback from brigades with a number of modifications incorporated into the build.

The 2010 – 2011 appliance build will consist of eight light response appliances, eight single cab and nine crew cab medium attack appliances with the crew cab build commencing within the next few weeks.

Construction has commenced on the six heavy support tankers to be built this year. These appliances are the first of 14 to be funded under the governments “Supporting Our Heroes” election commitment. These new support appliances will be delivered by the end of July to be available to support brigade operations over the coming fire season.

Painted red and white and fully funded and maintained by QFRS Rural Operations these new heavy support appliances are constructed on a 14 tonne two wheel drive Isuzu FTR700 cab chassis that have seating for three crew and are fitted with heat reflective curtains to provide burn-over protection for the crew. The body has a 6600 litre water tank and is fitted with a fixed diesel fire fighting water pump and hose reel for self protection and carries a 12,000 litre portable dam along with a transportable diesel water transfer pump. Other equipment includes a 2.2 kva portable generator and stem lighting to assist during night time activities as well as portable refrigeration and a shelter with folding table and chairs for a crew resting area during re-supply operations.

Each appliance will also carry a stock of replacement respirators, goggles, personal protection blankets and fire-fighting gloves as well as four additional drip torch fuel containers, two replacement drip torches and a range of fire hose and adaptors to support fire fighting operations.

Appliances will be strategically hosted by a brigade based upon a seasonal assessment of area and regional risk and on the capacity of the host brigade to crew and deploy the appliance when needed to support operations. The principal role of these appliances will be to support hazard mitigation and response activities when there is a need for a multiple brigade response. Identification of host brigades for the upcoming fire season is currently being finalised.
Grinding Away the Fire Risk

Rail grinding is a critical maintenance activity used to extend the life of tracks and trains and improve the overall condition of the rail network.

Queensland Rail (QR) is the national leader in rail grinding services and has worked in conjunction with the Rural Fire Service (RFS) to develop risk assessments prior to grinding, and on-board fire suppression and fighting capabilities to improve the safety of this critical maintenance activity.

The process

Prior to starting work, an automated risk assessment is carried out to determine whether it is safe to grind. The simple assessment works through seven conditions that contribute to fire risk. If conditions then change throughout the day, the risk can be easily and quickly re-assessed ensuring the team is one step ahead.

On-board fire fighting operation

Every rail grinding machine is fitted with the latest and greatest in on-board fire suppression and fighting capability. Spark containment blankets provide a first line of defence, limiting the number of sparks escaping the grind zone.

If grinding on timber sleepers, foam injected water is also used to pre-wet the track. In the rare case of a trackside fire, up to 75000 litres of water can be housed onboard the grinder, which is refilled by a fire fighting support trailer and 8000 litre water truck.

The grinder houses 8 x 50m hose reels, two remote operated water cannons and 4 manually operated water cannons. The grinder houses 4 x side ditch sprays which are remotely adjustable through 50 degrees and 800lt foam tanks with auto injection into water delivery points.

The remote controlled water cannon in the cabin has a reach of 25 metres, while hoses at each end of the machine can extinguish fires up to 40 metres away.

QR and the RFS have a long history of working together, and many brigades around the state provide support to QR during dry conditions. This partnership is just another way we are working to keep Queensland communities safe.

Brigade Mapping Toolset

Mapping of fires is increasingly requiring the fast and effective use and sharing of geographical information. Sophisticated computer-based Geographical Information Systems (GIS) have been available for over a decade but have been problematic to deploy and use. New, more streamlined and accessible computer-based tools that make mapping technologies more accessible and potentially useable at a field level are now available.

The Brigade Mapping Toolset, which was recently presented at the 2010 Rural Fire Service Volunteer Summit on the Sunshine Coast, is a guide about electronic mapping, sharing and using geographical data in non-map forms and the use of GPS in a brigade context. It is intended to be used by rural fire brigade members in the field or at station level. The Brigade Mapping Toolset focusses on tried and tested technologies, readily deployable by almost anyone with minimum changes to existing systems but does assume access to a computer. The technologies described are accessible at low or no cost. Internet access is required pre-event to download software and data to set up the mapping systems.

Maps are useful and may indeed be vital for navigation, both in everyday life and in the emergency environment. In the brigade environment they are an extremely useful tool to direct operations and record assets and infrastructure before and during exercises and events. Of all the information needed in an event, the “where” dimension is of crucial importance: assets in the wrong place are no help at all. Maps can be used before an event to map assets and hazards both within the brigade and at an inter-agency level.

Copies of the Brigade Mapping Toolset are available on CD through your relevant Area Office or via the Volunteer Portal.
2010 RFS Volunteer Summit
The Review of the Fire Warden System and the Permit to Light Fire

In Queensland the QFRS controls the use of fire based on the premise that a well established pre-fire organisation is a more cost effective and efficient method of fire control than fire suppression. This is achieved through the Fire Warden system and the Permit to Light Fire process that requires a permit be obtained before lighting a fire. The QFRS Rural Operations manage the fire warden system and administer the Permit to Light Fire process that has been operating essentially unchanged for more than sixty years. Fire events in the southern states, and latterly in Queensland have highlighted the need for greater controls on the lighting and controlling of fires of all types.

A review of the Fire Warden role and the Permit to Light Fire was initiated by the Assistant Commissioner Rural Operations with the key objective to ensure that QFRS Rural Operations has the capacity to maintain best practice in the proactive use of fire.

The Fire Warden Review addressed concerns raised by Fire Wardens themselves and resulted in the Landscape beyond 2000™ report and review workshops held in 2007. To support the review the Assistant Commissioner Rural Operations commissioned the Volunteerism Project Team of the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) at La Trobe University to conduct a survey of its Volunteer Fire Wardens in 2007-08. Rural Operations further developed the concepts through sub-groups chaired by Rural Operations Regional Managers, a cross section of firewardens and volunteers.

In November of 2009 the Commissioner QFRS approved a number of recommendations arising from the review. Implementation of the recommendations will provide the best measure of safety for communities from the impacts of bushfire and maintain the use of fire as a tool in sustainable land management well into the future. Changes, to be implemented progressively, will ensure the role of the Fire Warden remains contemporary and that the Permit to Light Fire system is effective in the management of fire in the landscape by the QFRS.

Implementation of a declared fire danger period system will achieve control of fire ignitions during that period of the year that we all consider as being the ‘fire season’. Dates for declaring and ceasing any ‘declared fire danger period’ will be determined with input from the Rural Operations Area Directors in their role of Chief Fire Warden. This will ensure that these declared fire danger periods are in keeping with local conditions and expertise. Should conditions change within a declared fire season zone, then the season could be shortened or extended.

A declared fire danger period is to set dates that impact on two main areas of fire management. Firstly, in association with a change to the Commissioner’s Notifications, this will remove the capacity for a fire to be lit without requiring a permit during the period. Secondly, during the declared fire season mandatory Permit to Light Fire conditions could take effect. These increased measures will provide a smarter and more effective approach to fire management and significantly restrict causal ignitions. Mandatory permit conditions will also provide a measure of relief to Fire Wardens from the need for them to take the responsibility to implement tighter controls on the issue of permits. Fire Wardens would still be free to impose additional conditions on their discretion.

An additional benefit of a declared fire danger period is that it provides a sound basis to develop community understanding of a heightened fire risk during this period of the year and a platform from which to educate the wider community on the need for a permit for any fire during periods of a declared fire danger period.

Fire Permit Zoning System

The state will be divided into three zones for the administration of permit application and issue and is based upon the situation of the diversity that now exists in regard to the purpose for which fire permits are issued.

The first of these three zones is seen as appropriate to restricting fire in the urban footprint areas to situations where fire is absolutely necessary. This will minimise issues that flow from inappropriate and inexperienced fire use that often leads to disputes over environmental matters, smoke nuisance and other social conflicts. Rural urban interface areas are the principal target of the second zone where few would disagree that tighter restriction needs to apply over the use of fire. Envisaged are changes such as compulsory permit applications and mandatory and recommended permit conditions that cover issues such as minimum levels of equipment, width of fire breaks and numbers of persons to be ‘on-scene’ during the period of the burn.

Those who earn their living from the land are the focus of the third zone. In this zone, the thinking is around providing opportunity for landholders to obtain a seasonal permit from their Fire Warden based upon the undertakings described and documented in their Fire Management Plan. This would provide flexibility and a capacity to react quickly when weather and environmental conditions matched those identified in their planning. For those primary producers that have not or do not wish to develop a Fire Management Plan, it would be business as usual with no changes envisaged to how people currently apply for and receive a Permit.

Change to Commissioners Notifications

In order to support the introduction of declared fire seasons, a change to the Commissioner’s Notifications needs to be enacted in order to remove certain exemptions that currently exist, which allow fires to be lit in certain circumstances (which are specified in a gazetted ‘Notification’ without the issuing of a Permit to Light Fire). The “Permit to Light” zoning system requires further development to ensure a good fit with the declared fire danger period and the Local Government Management Areas. Those determinations and the ensuing administrative changes will be discussed by the Regional Managers, Area Directors, Rural Operations staff, volunteers and industry representatives where appropriate.

“Things alter for the worse spontaneously, if they be not altered for the better designed.”

Francis Bacon, Lawyer, Politician, Philosopher (1561–1626)
Safety Matters

Are you ready for the fire season?

Last Bulletin we reflected on the fire season for 2009. Despite a record level of bushfire activity our volunteers responded tirelessly and with high levels of professionalism. We also reported on the numbers of injury incidents recorded during this unprecedented season and whilst a small number of our volunteers did sustain injuries, thankfully none were severe. Most of our volunteers who were injured are well on their way to recovery.

Something that was highlighted during the fire season was the need to be ready for operations. Now is a good time to do all those jobs around the station, if your brigade has one, that contribute to the safety and well being of members.

A station inspection is a legal requirement under WHS legislation in Queensland and should be conducted at least once a year. Some of the things you should look for are storage of foam and fuel; testing fire extinguishers; checking electrical equipment including a safety switch if you have one; and checking for tripping hazards. There is a station checklist on the Volunteer Portal or you can obtain one through your Area Office.

The benefit of doing this around this time of year is that you need to be ready for operations. Now is a good time to do all those jobs around the station, if your brigade has one, that contribute to the safety and well being of members.

The things you need to check on your appliance are the essential mechanical aspects such as oil, motors, tyres, lights, pumps, sirens etc. Also remember to check essential equipment such as hoes and reels, couplings, drip torch, other fire fighting equipment like rake hoes, fire extinguishers and stand pipes, tanks, knapsacks, fuel and foam containers, first aid kits, water supplies, radios, respiratory protection, ear plugs, safety PPE, and other tools like TAC packs and maps.

A reminder that an annual safety certificate is a must; if you need assistance in arranging this please contact your local Area Office.

First Aid kits

Another good example of being prepared for fire season is to ensure that your first aid kits are up to date with all the necessary equipment for your patch, both in the station and on the appliance.

This is an example of a first aid kit contents list that you might like to use as a guide. Remember that first aid kits should not include any scheduled medications (Paracetamol, Ventolin etc). The following is a good indication of the sorts of items that can be included.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents of first aid kit</th>
<th>Check</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adhesive strips for minor wound dressings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-allergic adhesive tape for securing dressings and strapping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye pads for emergency eye cover</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triangular bandage for slings, support and/or padding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital crepe or conforming bandage to hold dressings in place</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wound/combo dressings to control bleeding and for covering wounds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-adhesive dressings for wound dressings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety pins to secure bandages and slings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scissors for cutting dressings or clothing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidney dish for holding dressings and instruments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small dressings’ bowl for holding liquids</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gauze squares for cleaning wounds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forceps/tweezers for removing foreign bodies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disposable latex or vinyl gloves for infection control</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharps disposal container for infection control and disposal purposes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sterile saline solution/sterile water for emergency eye wash or for irrigating eye wounds (discard after opening)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resuscitation mask to be used by qualified personnel for resuscitation purposes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antiseptic solution for cleansing wounds and skin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plastic bags for waste disposal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note pad and pen/pencil for recording the injured or ill person's condition and treatment given</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-usable ice-pack for the management of sprains, straining and bruises</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other items which may be included:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy smooth crepe roller bandages to bandage limbs when immobilising after a snake bite</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Splint to immobilise limbs after snakebite or fractures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Melaleuca hydrogel burn dressings if there is no cool water supply for immediate burns treatment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Large burns sheet for covering burn areas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Clean sheeting for cooling and dressing burns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thermal/emergency blanket for the management of shock and to assist portability of a patient</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First aid manual or book for reference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appliance checks

Like the station, your appliance is a workplace and should be checked regularly to ensure it is in working condition both on and off the fireground. Rural Operations has developed an appliance check list which can be found on the Volunteer Portal or is available through your Area Office. A copy of this will be included in the next version of the RFB Manual which will be released shortly.

We'd like to acknowledge the excellent work of Ripley Valley Rural Fire Brigade in the development of their “Visitor Procedures and Information” booklet. This informative brochure provides visitors with everything they need to know about their station including, what to do in the case of an emergency, how to report an injury, parking on site and evacuation procedures. It is easy to use and very straightforward. If you would like further information on this initiative, the Secretary of Ripley Valley would be only too happy to hear from you. You can contact the Brigade via their website at www.ripleyvalleyruralfire.org.au

If you have any health or safety initiatives in your brigade that you would like to share, please send any relevant information, including photos, to your local Area Office. Until next time, take care and stay safe.

Equipment Catalogue

The revamped equipment catalogue is due for release shortly in a user friendly hard copy as well as an electronic version on the Volunteer Portal.

The new catalogue will introduce a Defibrillator into the list of equipment as well as a new style soft pack First Aid kit which will allow easier stowage on appliances. A number of standard equipment items will also become free issue through the Area Office.

If you have any health or safety initiatives in your brigade that you would like to share, please send any relevant information, including photos, to your local Area Office. Until next time, take care and stay safe.
**Air Operations**

The upcoming fire season 2010–2011 will once again see the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service procure the services of three AS350 B3 Squirrel Helicopters with an anticipated commencement date in mid to late August 2010. These aircraft, known as “Helitacks” are to be based at the Archerfield airport in South East Queensland and will each come equipped with a fibreglass “belly tank” that has a capacity to hold up to 1200 litres of water or foam/water solution. The aircraft also have a provision to carry 80 litres of foam concentrate which can be inducted into the belly tank in variable percentages depending upon the operational requirement.

The aircraft will be contracted under existing arrangements through the National Aerial Firefighting Centre (NAFC). NAFC was formed by the Australian States and Territories in July 2003 to provide a cooperative national arrangement for combating bushfires. It achieves this by facilitating the coordination and pre-commitment of a fleet of highly specialised firefighting aircraft that are readily available for use by state and Territory emergency agencies across Australia.

The “Helitacks” will complement a state wide fleet of “Call When Needed” aerial firefighting resources that are available for operational response in support of firefighting ground crews.

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**Rural Volunteering and Support Update**

**New pre-membership process**

It has now been nearly two years since the current process for screening new volunteers was implemented, including the need for criminal history checks and medical checks. Rural Operations recently reviewed this process and Area Office is now the collection point for all pre-membership checks. Area Office staff are your first point of contact for this process and can assist brigades with following up prospective new members.

So what is new – well nothing much has changed. The process is still the same in so far as the brigade’s role in recruiting and accepting new memberships. Prospective members still complete the pre-membership forms which include the criminal history check and medical assessment forms (if they are required) and sends these documents to Area Office in the reply paid envelope provided. The medical assessment form is sent to the Area Office in a sealed envelope to ensure privacy is maintained. The prospective member will still be notified in writing once their Criminal History Check is complete and will still be required to present their letter to the brigade so that the brigade can vote on the membership.

The main thing to note is that until the prospective member receives their letter from QFRS indicating they have completed the pre-membership process, they are not to participate in any training or other brigade activities. This is an important step to protect them and brigades.

New forms and pre membership kits reflecting the changed process have been printed and you should have received these by now. If not please let your Area Office know as soon as possible so that a kit can be sent to you. All new membership forms will be available on the Volunteer Portal.

**The Rural Fire Brigade Manual**

The current version of the RFB manual was released in 2007 and has been under review for the last eight months. It is nearing completion and is expected to be released early in the second half of this year. There has been a complete overhaul of the manual including revision of sections and some new information that will assist you in managing brigade operations and business.

Re-prints will be sent to brigade secretaries and first officers once finalised and of course will be available on the Volunteer Portal.

**Finance update**

The Australian Tax Office and Federal Treasury are working towards amending the Income Tax Assessment Act to include Deductible Gift Recipient categories for volunteer fire brigades. This will lead to a broader level of accessibility to tax deductible donations to all volunteer based emergency services including volunteer fire brigades.

Submissions about the draft legislation were open until 25 May 2010 and we are waiting to hear on the outcome of these.

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**Flexible Learning for Volunteers goes Asia Pacific**

A number of exciting developments have occurred within the Flexible Learning for Volunteers initiative since the last Bulletin was released, including an invitation to attend the prestigious Asia Pacific LearnX event.

This E-Learning and Training Solutions International Conference and Expo drew speakers from across the globe including Argentina, Canada, Germany, India, Singapore, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and of course Australia.

Our very own Flexible Learning for Volunteers initiative was showcased at this event through a presentation which was entitled “A new approach for a new world”. This presentation examined what is being called the new world order for learning and development, how interconnectivity and technology has shifted learning and development and utilised the Flexible Learning for Volunteers Training Toolbox as a real life case study success story.

The presentation received an overwhelmingly positive response and feedback during the session and throughout the event from attending delegates. Attending delegates were unanimous in their supporting comments for the Flexible Learning for Volunteers Training Toolbox. In summary it was suggested that:

In today’s rapidly changing world the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service Rural Operations initiative demonstrates all of the principles and characteristics of a training initiative that is responsive to the needs of its learners, embraces the benefits that can be derived from technology, without excluding those members of the community who are not savvy in this medium and meets the emerging trend of learners demanding innovative, appealing and time efficient training.

These comments reinforce the exciting new direction that Rural Operations is taking in providing a flexible approach to learning for its vast cohort of volunteers which has been made possible through special election commitment monies received from the state government.

For more information log on to the Volunteer Portal or talk with your local Brigade Training and Support Officer.
Rupertswood RFB Profile

“Rupertswood RFB is progressive and forward thinking and strives to provide a professional and effective service to the surrounding community. The brigade has members from all walks of life and relishes in sharing the varied skills and experiences they bring with them.” 2nd Officer Dean Jones.

Rupertswood RFB was founded in 1984 and Secretary Tony Longson remembers what the brigade was like in the early days. “The first fire attended by brigade members was a grass fire on one of the early blocks and was attended by the wife of the First Officer, Jan Paine, with hose and stand pipe in her car boot. There was not a truck at that time.”

Today the brigade has two medium appliances and a station which is currently being renovated to include facilities to help the brigade conduct their training and operations more efficiently and comfortably. “For the first time ever Rupertswood will have access to a toilet, which is particularly exciting for the female members, as well as catering facilities, which means we can now conduct longer/weekend training sessions at the premises. It also offers members a lot more comfort in the event of prolonged operations. With ample space in the remainder of the shed, there is also the opportunity to ‘hire out’ the facilities to the community that supports us and that in turn, we support” said Rupertswood member Nicole Bradley.

Recently Rupertswood RFB started holding exercise training sessions before regular brigade training which helped Rupertswood take out second place in the Fighting Fit competition.

All but three of the newest members have completed FMS which helps the brigade effectively respond to firefighting and accident response, especially when the dry conditions of mid to late 2009 saw the brigade regularly fighting fires from September right up until 6pm Christmas Eve.

In addition to firefighting, Rupertswood is actively involved in other community events like Anzac Day parades, the Convoy for Camp Quality and school fairs. The brigade is very active in their community and neighbouring communities as they regularly hold BBQs to get to know the members of surrounding brigades better.

Members value the opportunities being a volunteer of Rupertswood RFB brings such as learning and improving skills and knowledge in fire prevention and control as well as other life skills. They said the best thing about being a volunteer at Rupertswood is being part of a team who trust and count on each other in any situation.

Reliance Petroleum Sponsorship Recipients Announced

Emergency Services Minister Neil Roberts announced the renewed partnership between Reliance Petroleum and the QFRS at the CRT Farmfest near Toowoomba on Tuesday 1 June 2010. This renewed partnership will see rural fire brigades from across the state share in $100,000 worth of slip-on fire fighting units.

Congratulations to the 20 brigades listed below who will be receiving these slip-on units. Presentations will be held with each of the brigades over the coming months.

- Oman Ama RFB
- Blackwater RFB
- Grove RFB
- Mt Macarthur RFB
- Neleen RFB
- South Barcoo RFB
- Coleman RFB
- Esmeralda RFB
- Holroyd RFB
- Minburn RFB
- Petford RFB
- Longford Creek RFB
- Mount Aberdeen RFB
- Euri Creek West RFB
- Baffle Creek RFB
- Crowman RFB
- Springfield RFB
- Upper Dawson RFB
- V Gate RFB
- West Injune RFB

Oman Ama RFB from the Darling Downs was the first brigade in Queensland to benefit from the Reliance Petroleum sponsorship program this year. Congratulations and we look forward to presenting the remaining units in the coming months.
RFS Youth Summit – recruiting and retaining the next generation

Across Australia the issue of an ageing workforce and population is affecting all organisations and the Queensland Rural Fire Service (QFRS) is no different. Recruitment and retention of volunteers is a priority for the RFS and QFRS Rural Operations. Part of this is the recruitment and retention of younger volunteers – Gen Y volunteers.

Assistant Commissioner Steve Rothwell said in order to improve methods of recruiting and retaining younger volunteers, Rural Operations held the RFS Youth Summit in February this year.

“The purpose of the Youth Summit was to meet with volunteer representatives aged between 18 and 30 to better understand their needs and wants and how we can use the knowledge and experiences to recruit more young volunteers,” Assistant Commissioner Rothwell said.

“The graph to the right is a snapshot of our current volunteer workforce by age as at May 2010.

“As you can see, the majority of our volunteers are in the 45 – 54 age range, with very large numbers also in the 55 – 64 age range. In many cases these volunteers are choosing to take on lesser active roles in their brigades and we need to ensure we have the next generation on board to fill these positions and learn from our experienced volunteers.

“The Youth Summit was our opportunity to gather together a number of our younger, very active volunteers and talk to them about the RFS, their thoughts on key issues and ways we can work with the next generation.”

What did we do?

Representatives at the Youth Summit included volunteers, aged 18 to 30, from Brisbane, South East, South West and the North Coast regions.

The day was broken down into two sections. The morning was designed to provide attendees with an overview of some of the key issues facing volunteers and initiatives being undertaken by Rural Operations. The issues discussed included climate change and the role of emergency service volunteers, RFS training and flexible learning opportunities, the RFS Volunteer Portal and communication tools, as the work we are doing to recruit and retain volunteers.

The morning finished with a presentation from two BTSOs on progression from volunteer to staff member.

The afternoon session was designed to allow the volunteers to provide their thoughts and feedback on these issues. The group broke into three workgroups and answered a number of questions regarding their experiences in the RFS. The topics discussed were:

- Recruitment and retention
- Communication
- Training
- Reward and recognition
- What do they tell their friend about the RFS?

What did we learn?

Some of key points to come out of these sessions were that these volunteers choose to volunteer with the RFS because they wanted to volunteer and make a difference, but they wanted it to be a fun experience. When asked about communication they said it needs to be simple and immediate and when asked about training, they all stated their goal is to do as much training as possible because it helps them, not only in their brigade, but in outside life as well. When it came to reward and recognition they said yes, it is important to them, but it does not have to be grand scale, state-wide recognition. Often it is the small things that make a difference.

How can this help your brigade?

If you are looking to recruit the younger generation, use your existing Gen Y volunteers as the spokespeople for your brigade. Peer networks are extremely important to young people and rate highly as an influencing factor for this age bracket, so it is important to have younger volunteers from your brigade, talking to young people in the community. It is also important that your recruitment processes are casual and informal.

All of the research into why younger people volunteer tells us that for people in the under 35 age bracket, the self benefit aspect of volunteering is very important. This doesn't mean they aren't interested in giving to the community, it means they are also interested in development opportunities for themselves–so when you are recruiting, emphasise the opportunities available through the RFS.

Keeping them

Recruiting volunteers is only half the job, keeping them is the other half. And this is even more challenging with a generation Y.

One of the major points made at the Youth Summit was they need constant activity, stimulation and learning opportunities. It is important that when you recruit younger volunteers you a plan in place to get them active straight away and keep them that way. You can think about inductions, training activities, social activities and more, so these members feel involved and stimulated.

Your brigade needs to communicate with them regularly. Whether that be through weekly meetings, email updates, brigade newsletters or SMS and phone calls. This generation is used to having information at their fingertips.
The Volunteer Community Educator Evolution has begun

“Locals Educating Locals”

Volunteer Community Educator (VCE) workshops have commenced across the state with a high level of enthusiasm and success as the number of VCE’s continues to grow. The recently conducted Volunteer Summit proved to be an excellent platform to promote this exciting new role and the support received from attending volunteers was overwhelming to say the least.

The VCE workshops are designed to introduce people to their new role while creating the opportunity for networks to be formed. The workshops also allow for the sharing of ideas and strategies in engaging communities and delivery methods for the range of programs available to the VCE. The workshops are relaxed, informative and promote interaction by all. They also provide information on:

- Understanding community perception
- Participate in Community Safety Activity assessments
- Review of the Volunteer Portal
- Documenting/recording of presentations
- Identifying the need for community education presentations.

With support provided by Brigade Training and Support Officers (BTSO’s), Area Training and Support Officers (ATSOS), Zone Officers and Mitigation and Education Officers (MEOs), our VCE’s learn to understand the processes involved and the need for specific presentations in at risk communities. Our VCEs, in conjunction with brigades, will deliver bushfire and fire safety education to members of their own communities. The VCE role will support the excellent work already being performed by our brigades while improving the coordination and recording of community education activities across the state.

*Locals Educating Locals* is the basis of the VCE concept and how we will ensure vital messages reach the necessary members of our Queensland communities. Some programs available to the VCE include:

- **PREPARE, ACT, SURVIVE**, (replacing Bushfire Prepared Communities)
- Bushfire Survival Plan – providing advice and support if requested
- Property Advice – visiting people providing advice and support
- Fire Ed – QFRS Year 1 program
- School Bushfire Education – Year 6/7 in rural schools

- Fire Warden and Permit to Light Fire system.

The VCE role is a “self managed” workload with no expectations being placed on individuals as to what programs or how many programs they should deliver in any given timeframe. If you think you may be suited to the role contact your Area Office for more information and be sure to support the VCE’s in your brigade to promote the positive community education messages of the QFRS and help make our Queensland communities more resilient to the impact of fire.

**Why I Became a Volunteer Community Educator**

John Bowles VCE and First Officer, Ripley Valley Rural Fire Brigade

I became a VCE as I feel education plays a very important role in advising the community about the effects of fire and the preparations that people can undertake to lessen the impact of fire related situations in the future. The VCE program has added a fresh approach to community education while providing an increased level of professionalism. The concept provides a structured framework towards educating Queenslanders with tools and resources that enhance the delivery of the many programs available.

Being a VCE has allowed me to talk to the public in an organised, positive and professional manner at brigade activities. This means as a VCE you are talking to the members of your own community and local areas, thereby hopefully making them safer places in which to live. This has also allowed me to meet other VCE’s who have the same passion to help others in the community.

My positive experiences of being a VCE are you feel good when the public acknowledges and say that they will now buy a new smoke alarm battery, purchase an additional smoke alarm, develop a fire evacuation plan, and ask questions about preparing their properties. Giving Blazer stickers to the children always places a smile on their faces and helps promote the Rural Fire Service in a positive manner.

I would recommend becoming a VCE to all RFB members and any other interested persons as we have in recent years seen the tragedy, devastation and loss of life that can be caused by all types of fires. If being a VCE and giving the public relevant messages or information ensures that just one or the majority of these people will be better prepared, then it is all worth it.

**Becoming a Volunteer Community Educator**

Sarah Martin – Tamborine Rural Fire Brigade

I chose to become a Community Educator because the wider community needs more information about the QFRS, especially the rural sector. I’m from Tamborine and over the past 10 years the area has experienced an increase in population. I know most families have moved to Tamborine from the suburbs and my goal as one of Tamborine’s Volunteer Community Educators is to make sure these families are aware of what the fire service provides to their community. I believe that today’s volunteer society is an aging one. I am only 22 years old and I want to learn as much as I can from our senior firefighters so I can then educate upcoming firefighters and the community with local knowledge. I am very passionate about making my community a safe one and without Volunteer Community Educators getting the safety messages out there, who else will? If I can get these messages through to just one person, I know my job is done.

**Information for Trainers**

An updated TAE50110 Certificate in Training and Assessment. More information on the changes and what they means for trainers will be provided to qualified trainers through the Rural Research and Training unit in coming weeks.
So what's currently available? There are a number of resources that are already available for use, for example the Volunteer Portal Training Toolbox, the Rural Fire Service Awareness program, Understanding Wildfire, Wildfire Prediction Tools, Managing Difficult Situations and First Aid. If you have not seen these resources I would encourage you to log on to the Learning Centre page of the Volunteer Portal or talk with your Brigade Training and Support Officer.

For those of you who are regular users of the Training Toolbox you will see we have begun loading a new series of learning bytes. Series III consists of four new clips which cover two equipment topics, recruitment and Workplace Health and Safety principles. We have also developed two brand new interactive simulations. These animated interactive simulations are a great way to practice the steps involved in using a piece of equipment and will be particularly useful for new volunteers or those who would like to refresh their knowledge and skills.

The final touches are also being put on the brand new Flexible Learning for First Officer Program and the Flexible Learning options for the Crew Leader Program. Keep an eye out in the latest news section of the Volunteer Portal for their release.

In the senior years of high school students are now offered the opportunity to undertake Certificate II as part of their senior studies. In 2009 Rural Operations formed a partnership with the Department of Education Training and the Arts so students at the Kilcoy State High School could be offered the Certificate II in Public Safety (Firefighting Operations) as one of the programs available to them.

To undertake the program, the grade 11 and 12 students (those over the age of 16) are required to join the closest rural fire brigade as a Registered Junior. The Caboolture Area Office, in particular BTSO Graham King, has lead the trial and interest in the program was extremely high when it was discussed with senior students at the high school. Nine students have enrolled and now spend their Wednesdays at the Kilcoy Fire Station undergoing the necessary training to achieve this certification.

The numbers of volunteer rural firefighters in the Kilcoy area is set to increase with the implementation of a new trial program at Kilcoy State High School.

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Six rural stations (Villenave, Hazeldean, Mt Kilcoy, Stoney Creek, Mt Mee and Stanmore) have benefited from these new members as these students have all joined their local brigade and, in addition to their Wednesday studies, are participating in the training offered at brigade level as well attendance at community events.

Recently the students attended the Kilcoy Show as part of the program and they were involved in creating a bushfire scenario and assisted in promoting QFRS throughout the day, handing out educational brochures and information. Participation in such activities contributes toward the achievement of a core module, “Undertake Community Safety Activities.”

Each week Rural Volunteers from the targeted brigades assist with the program delivery, providing opportunities for the students to gain hands on, practical experiences with rural and urban appliances. The development of this program has two-fold benefits:

- An increase in the volunteers in rural brigades and the introduction of some “young blood” into the stations thus ensuring continued membership in the rural brigades.
- Provides opportunities for senior students to gain additional points toward their Queensland Certificate of Education from the Certificate II in Public Safety. QFRS is a nationally registered training organisation.

Students will be completing approximately one hundred hours of additional study, as well as participating in brigade training, incidents and field work; completing four core units and seven elective units. Many students have already realised that becoming a member of the Rural Fire Service offers many unique opportunities for team work, camaraderie and learning experiences. They know that training is hard work, but it can also be fun and exciting!

A “How To” guide on implementing the Certificate II in Public Safety (Firefighting Operations) program is currently being completed and will be distributed to all Area Offices to assist any interested areas in implementing this program at a school near you.
The competition operational scenarios not only reflect the core firefighting skills and the diverse roles undertaken by firefighters such as rescue and community education, they also promote teamwork and skills maintenance training. The Queensland Firefighter Competitions provide an incentive and challenge for all firefighters.

In 2003, the competition was expanded to include all Queensland Fire Rescue Service (QFRS) full-time, auxiliary and volunteer operational firefighters. Since the introduction of full-time and volunteer operational firefighters into the competition, the interest and participation of rural teams has been growing steadily, and the competitions are seen by many, as a further opportunity for all levels of QFRS to work together.

The events run are mostly skills and drills from the Urban perspective and rural teams need to familiarise themselves with a whole new set of skills in order to participate. The equipment used is also a little different to the ‘yellow’ truck however this is a great opportunity for rural volunteers to learn about the equipment on the big ‘red’ trucks.

In 2006 a tenth event was introduced using a rural appliance and rural equipment. This event is now a competitive event giving teams points toward the overall winner and champion firefighter.

In preparation for the Championships, many hours of hard work and sweat goes into training. Partnerships are being formed in the training stages with auxiliary teams working with rural teams to ensure all are familiar with the necessary skills and drills.

It is now a familiar sight to see yellows and blues working together, training, competing and of course out on the fire ground. This year the Kilcoy Auxiliaries formed a composite team with the Villeneuve Rural team.

Each year the rural teams gain further confidence and strengthen their skills. It is not unusual for a rural team to be named in the placings and have even had the prestigious award of Champion Firefighter. Many rural firefighters find the championships an exciting and challenging event. These teams train hard, develop a high level of fire-fighting skills as well as determination to succeed and build teamwork.

For more information, please visit the Firefighter Championships homepage at www.fire.qld.gov.au//FF.Comps/
The Fighting Fit Winners!

Congratulations to everyone who participated in the RFS Fighting Fit 2010 challenge. There were some fantastic results and I encourage all of you to keep up the great effort.

Just over 50 staff and volunteers signed up for the challenge and completed the entire 12 weeks. These 50 individuals can now enjoy the benefits that come with being 411kg (8.95%) lighter and 58.5cm (11.2%) slimmer around the waist.

While our competition was underway, QFRS Urban held a Fighting Fit Challenge of their own and competitors are now 327.7kg (5.6%) lighter and 553.3cm (6.91%) slimmer around the waist. RFS competitors lost a huge 83kg and 31cm more than our urban counterparts.

The brilliant results are as follows:

1st Place Brigade Team – Hatton Vale Heart Attacks
The Hatton Vale Heart Attacks lost a massive 35.3 kilograms (31.3%) and 49 centimetres (14.4%) from their waists. For the fantastic efforts of this team of three they have won a signed Titans jersey, a Healthy Food Fast Recipe book, four Camping Chairs and four 1kg Fire extinguishers.

2nd Place Brigade Team – Rupertswood Fat Fighters
The Rupertswood Fat Fighters lost 25.5 kilograms (3.73%) and 30.5 centimetres (10.69%) from their waists. For the fantastic efforts of this team of eight they have won a signed Cowboys jersey, a Healthy Food Fast Recipe book, a Honeywell Drink Bottle and a three month Platinum gift membership to Fitness First.

Top Male Volunteer – Stephen Gardiner from Hatton Vale Heart Attacks
Stephen, the Challenge Team Leader of Hatton Vale Heart Attacks, lost 11.95% in weight and 15.4% from his waist. For his amazing effort he has won a Healthy Food Fast Recipe Book, 2 1kg fire extinguishers, a Honeywell Drink Bottle and a 3 month Platinum gift membership to Fitness First.

Top Female Volunteer – Hendrika Watson from The Sand Goannas
Hendrika, a volunteer from Scrubby Creek Rural Fire Brigade otherwise known as The Sand Goannas, lost 4.22% weight and 6.69% from her waist. Congratulations Hendrika on winning a Healthy Food Fast Recipe Book, two 1kg fire extinguishers, a Honeywell Drink Bottle and a three month Platinum gift membership to Fitness First.

Most Improved Lifestyle (Volunteer) – Karl Bulpin from Hatton Vale Heart Attacks
Karl, a participant from the Hatton Vale Heart Attacks, lost 11.7% weight and 16.38% from his waist. Karl also had the highest average of 94 ‘Ticks’ per week. This tremendous effort saw Karl win a Healthy Food Fast Recipe Book and a Honeywell Drink Bottle.

Most Improved Lifestyle (Staff) – Peta Miller-Rose from The Triple F’s
Peta Miller-Rose, Challenge Team Leader for Ipswich Area Office team The Triple F’s, has taken home the title of Most Improved Lifestyle (Staff) for the highest average of 59 ‘Ticks’ per week. Peta averaged 59 ‘Ticks’ per week. Peta also lost 4.82% of her weight and 5.68% of her waist.

This tremendous effort saw Karl win a Healthy Food Fast Recipe Book and a Honeywell Drink Bottle.

Thanks to everyone for their enthusiasm throughout the challenge. No doubt you all can feel a difference in your health and wellbeing and that you will continue to keep up the fantastic work even though the competition is over. Don’t forget the 2011 Fighting Fit competition is only a few months away!

Public Bushfire Incident Website

The QFRS has continued to assess the outcomes and recommendations of the Victorian Royal Commission into the Victorian bushfires. Through this process it has been identified that Queensland could improve its communication and delivery of bushfire incident information to the public. One method of communicating this information is through the utilisation of a website containing a map showing the location incidents, basic details of the incident and warning advice as per the national PREPARE.ACT.SURVIVE. campaign.

The PREPARE.ACT.SURVIVE. campaign is an initiative under the national framework where the emphasis is placed on people voluntarily evacuating their properties when the fire danger is in the higher scales of extreme and catastrophic. This message is consistent with Queensland’s “prepare, stay and defend or go early” program, with Queensland Police or QFRS Incident Controllers being able to order evacuations if the risk is too high.

Currently publicly aimed information on website is being provided via a manual process of typing information onto them. This approach depends on a staff resource to try and describe the location of an incident and the user then having to interpret that description. Being a labour intensive approach only the most critical incidents are communicated via the websites leading to an increased volume of telephone enquiries on smaller incidents.

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The PREPARE.ACT.SURVIVE. campaign is initiated in response to the outcomes and recommendations of the Victorian Royal Commission into the Victorian bushfires. Through this process it has been identified that Queensland could improve its communication and delivery of bushfire incident information to the public. One method of communicating this information is through the utilisation of a website containing a map showing the location incidents, basic details of the incident and warning advice as per the national PREPARE.ACT.SURVIVE. campaign.

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## Contact Details for Area Offices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OFFICE</th>
<th>PHONE</th>
<th>FAX</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>North Coast Region</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryborough Area Office</td>
<td>(07) 4190 4839</td>
<td>(07) 4190 4853</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bundaberg Area Office</td>
<td>(07) 4153 3244</td>
<td>(07) 4151 2166</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caloundra Area Office</td>
<td>(07) 5420 7517</td>
<td>(07) 5420 7521</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>South West Region</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Toowoomba Area Office</td>
<td>(07) 4616 2835</td>
<td>(07) 4614 2833</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roma Area Office</td>
<td>(07) 4622 2074</td>
<td>(07) 4622 1451</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>South East Region</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ipswich Area Office</td>
<td>(07) 3381 7122</td>
<td>(07) 3381 7116</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Brisbane Region</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Caboolture Area Office</td>
<td>(07) 5420 1333</td>
<td>(07) 5420 1339</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Far Northern Region</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cairns Area Office</td>
<td>(07) 4039 8240</td>
<td>(07) 4039 8647</td>
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<tr>
<td>Innisfail Area Office</td>
<td>(07) 4061 0650</td>
<td>(07) 4061 0651</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Northern Region</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Townsville Area Office</td>
<td>(07) 4796 9082</td>
<td>(07) 4799 7184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charters Towers/Cloncurry Area Office</td>
<td>(07) 4787 8213</td>
<td>(07) 4787 4708</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Central Region</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mackay Area Office</td>
<td>(07) 4965 6641</td>
<td>(07) 4965 6640</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barcaldine Area Office</td>
<td>(07) 4651 1190</td>
<td>(07) 4651 1803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerald Area Office</td>
<td>(07) 4982 0001</td>
<td>(07) 4982 0411</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rockhampton Area Office</td>
<td>(07) 4938 4736</td>
<td>(07) 4922 2768</td>
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