Rural Fire Bulletin

November 2011

Official Newsletter of the Rural Fire Service, Queensland Fire and Rescue Service

BUSHFIRE SEASON IS HERE!
HOW PREPARED ARE YOU?

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Acting Assistant Commissioner’s Message

This year’s potential fire activity is predicted to centre around grasslands due predominantly to the growth experienced in the southern, western and central parts of the State, having been brought about primarily by last year’s La Nina weather event on top of previous years of drought with little fire activity.

The 2009 fire season was regarded as one of Queensland worst seasons; however that year saw activity more along the east coast with minimal activity in the central parts of the State. The 2011 seasonal assessment shows large tracks of land within Queensland, Northern Territory, South Australia, New South Wales and Western Australia carrying abundant grasses creating significant fuel loads, with the bulk of it being fully cured. From a local brigade perspective through to Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) Regional and State management, this will require us to work closely with primary producer landholders, main roads, local councils and the like, in identifying:

Farewell from Steve Rothwell

By the time this edition of the Bulletin hits the mailboxes there will be a new Assistant Commissioner heading up QFRS Rural Operations. I departed QFRS on Friday 2 September where I took up a position with the Northern Territory Fire and Rescue as the Director and Chief Fire Officer of that organisation. I would like to wish my successor all the best in the role and I leave having made many good friends within the Rural Fire Service (RFS). As with all leadership roles, you endeavour to leave the organisation in a better place than when you started and hopefully my team and I have done just that. I acknowledge that there is more to do and this is an inevitable part of life, however I am confident that the RFS will continue to evolve further and continue to position itself as a very strong, progressive and essential component of the QFRS, further confirming that the Queensland model simply makes sense and can be benchmarked against by others within the fire service industry.
We have been able to transition many ideas into mainstream business with the involvement of many dedicated people and I am pleased to announce that I have recently commissioned four strategic committees to take us into the next chapter. These committees (Strategy and Governance, Operations, Research and Training, Volunteering and Support) will see volunteers as key members of each group and these representatives have been drawn from all parts of the State and various brigade models, giving us true volunteer representation. The groups will meet on a quarterly basis commencing in 2012.

I am extremely proud to have been involved with the RFS and to have had the opportunity to meet and get to know many of the dedicated volunteers of the RFS. I truly believe that over recent years as volunteers of the RFS you demonstrated to Queensland that you are both professional and dedicated, and in particular, that the RFS does not just fight fires, but assists Queensland communities in many ways.

It’s pleasing to note that all the work undertaken in the last few years has not gone unrecognised. Rural Operations and the RFS have been recognised on numerous occasions. In recent years the Volunteer Portal, Workplace Health and Safety, Volunteer Recruitment, the Training Trailer and Simulator, the Volunteer Portal, the Kilcoy Certificate II Program and the Volunteer Community Educator Program have all been recognised through the Minister’s Awards for Excellence, and on top of this, the Flexible Learning program was a State and National winner in the Australian Safer Communities Awards. All these initiatives couldn’t have been possible if it wasn’t for the input of volunteers through various forums, where these programs were tailored to suit your needs. I thank those involved for their input, the end results speak for themselves.

I would like to close by acknowledging and thanking the thousands of volunteers within the RFS, and this acknowledgment also includes the many Fire Wardens, for their dedication to the organisation and their communities. To single out people who have gone the ‘extra mile’ and contributed to our successes would take up most of this edition of the Bulletin however you know who you are and I thank you. I must also thank my staff in Rural Operations for their positive ‘can do’ approach and acknowledge their on-going commitment to the QFRS and the many volunteers of the RFS.

I wish you all the best for the future, and thank you for your support and commitment.

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

We are very pleased to advise that the Commissioner Queensland Fire and Rescue Service recently announced that Neil Gallant has been appointed to the role of Assistant Commissioner Rural Operations effective as of 31 October 2011.

Assistant Commissioner Neil Gallant commenced service in May of 1983 with the Mackay Fire Brigade board and has served in Brisbane at State Training as well as key projects including the QFRS review of the Linton Coronial Inquiry, the GST introduction to QFRS and was the Area Director at Maroochydore before being appointed as the Assistant Commissioner Central Region in September of 2003.

Neil also lead the region during the significant fire season of 2009 and the during the recent flood and disaster events of early 2011. Neil holds a Bachelors Degree in Teaching, Further Education and Training and is a Member of the Institute of Fire Engineers.

As Assistant Commissioner for Central Region, Neil will be well known to a number of Rural Fire Service volunteers. He brings a wealth of experience and knowledge to the role and the Service and will provide strong direction to lead the RFS into the future.

Paul Adcock AFSM
Acting Assistant Commissioner
Rural Operations
Queensland Fire and Rescue Service

It is important that we understand the environment that we could be operating within and understand the importance of these grasslands to the landholders current and future stock and crops.
New FireCare Peer Referral and Liaison Officer Role

You may be familiar with the role of Peer Support Officer (PSO) and the work undertaken by the FireCare network which is essential to provide appropriate support to our staff and volunteers.

At the Rural Executive & Regional Manager’s forum on 1 June 2011, Barbara Gonda Manager FireCare formally tabled a proposal to further support the existing network of PSO’s through the implementation of a new Peer Referral and Liaison Officer (PRLO) role.

A PRLO will be a specially trained Rural Fire Service (RFS) volunteer who has nominated and been accepted to perform work with the PSO in their local and regional area. The new role will focus on offering functional and sustainable psychological support for RFS volunteers.

The role is about volunteers understanding volunteers and will be logistically and appropriately tailored to the support needs of volunteer rural firefighters. It is proposed this role would have less emphasis on support skills and more emphasis on identifying needs and resourcing.

Rural Operations and FireCare are developing an appropriate training framework to support this role; including an opportunity for volunteers to submit an Expression of Interest and participate at dedicated training forums during 2011/12.

For more information, please refer to the PRLO brochure included with this edition of the Bulletin.

Anakie RFB volunteer is a New Inventor

On 27 July 2011, the ABC show “New Inventors” featured an invention co-developed by Les Dunn and Anakie RFB volunteer Ron Church. Inspiration for the invention, a Safety Idler System, came from many years working in the mining industry, trying to fix and maintain inefficient systems.

The Safety Idler Assembly is an improved frame and roller system for “idler” rolls on mine conveyor belts. These are the rolls that support the belt, allowing it to travel freely along thousands of metres. The design incorporates features that make the system easier, quicker and much safer to maintain.

The most important safety feature is that the frame can be dropped down away from the belt, and all the rollers can be accessed and changed by one person, from one side of the belt, without leaving the safety of the walkway area.

To watch the Safety Idler System video clip from New Inventors, visit the website at www.abc.net.au/tv/newinventors and search for Episode 25, 2011.

Central Queensland Fire Education Appeal

The Community Enterprise Foundation™ has partnered with the Department of Community Safety and 10 Bendigo Bank and Community Bank® branches in Central Queensland to launch the Central Queensland Fire Education Appeal.

By placing donation tins inside Bendigo Banks branches and allowing donations through their website, Bendigo Bank raised enough money to purchase a Training Trailer for use by rural fire brigades in Central Region.
Volunteers trackside at V8 supercars event

When the V8 supercars came to Townsville in July, Mal Edmiston a Volunteer Community Educator and Fire Warden from Rangewood was on hand as Fire and Rescue Marshall for the three day event.

Mal was one member of a team of Confederation of Australian Motor Sport accredited trackside officials who volunteered their time at the event, watching the action from various pole positions around the track ensuring the explosive action stays on the track.

Mal was part of the fire crews in the pits securing the refuelling station, or trackside ready to pull a driver to safety, clearing debris and putting out fires. He was kitted out in a full fire retardant suit made of the same material as the V8 drivers.

Townsville V8 Supercars organiser Kim Faithful said the skills of volunteers such as Mal were invaluable for the event.

“They certainly get a front row view of the action and whenever there is an accident it is the fire wardens who will be there with the fire extinguisher.”

Mal certainly keeps himself busy. When he isn’t volunteering his time educating his community about bushfire or helping trackside at the V8 supercars, he offers his services as a Justice of the Peace, is a drum major for the Townsville RSL Pipes and Drums band, and is the Australian Commissioner for the Scots clan of ‘Edmonstone’.

Training Trailers were developed by Rural Operations to enable the delivery of theoretical and practical training in fire behaviour to volunteer firefighters and the community.

These trailer units are fully self contained and are able to provide audio visual presentations and real time fire behaviour exercises in the field. The trailer unit can also be used for electronic and visual dissemination of information to specific audiences at public events and functions.

They enable practical fire scenario training to capitalise on lessons learnt and offer an effective means of engaging with local communities and spreading the message about preparing properties in advance of the bushfire season. As these units are transportable, this enables training to be conducted in essentially any location.

It is critical the community understands the importance of fire prevention. These trailers, when used in presentations to the local community, are effective tools for increasing local communities’ fire safety knowledge and improving their response to a fire.
Energex Sponsorship Success

As announced in the July edition of the Bulletin, Energex renewed their sponsorship agreement with the Rural Fire Service for 2011. This agreement will see a further $75,000 worth of equipment and resources made available to Rural Fire Brigades in the Brisbane and South East Regions.

Brigades were invited to apply for a range of equipment including transportable marquees; portable fridges; generators and lighting tower kits; large eskees; and portable pumps.

Acting Assistant Commissioner Paul Adcock was extremely pleased to be able to announce that all brigades who nominated were successful in their applications for equipment, with every application receiving at least one of the items they nominated for.

Handover presentations have begun and will finish before Christmas to these successful brigades.

ENERGEX CEO Terry Effeney hopes the equipment from this grants program will make the work rural firefighters do easier.

“The firefighters do an outstanding job working in conjunction with local councils and property owners in protecting their local communities,” said Mr Effeney.

“This equipment will provide shelter and refreshment during firefighting, hazard reduction operations and can even provide shelter during community education activities.”

Volunteer Community Educator Program and Senior Schools Certificate II Program wins Minister’s Awards for Excellence 2011

Each year the Minister’s Awards for Excellence in Community Safety recognise teams, units and volunteer groups for their outstanding achievements within the Department of Community Safety. These groups set new standards within their field and promote the department’s vision of creating a safer community and better quality of life for Queenslanders.

Judging of the Minister’s Awards was undertaken by panels of external, independent leaders. The Honourable Neil Roberts, Minister for Emergency Services, Mr Jim McGowan, Director General and Mr Steve Waters, Executive Manager Sales and Marketing of the Queensland Police Credit Union presented the 2011 Minister’s Awards for Excellence in a special ceremony at Parliament House.
Rural Operations won the “Fair” category for the Volunteer Community Educators (VCE) Program, and also won the “Smart” category for the Certificate II Senior Schools Program.

The “Fair” category recognises outstanding performance and achievement in supporting safe and caring communities. VCEs play an important role in supporting their communities by providing credibility and local knowledge to the delivery of community education in Queensland communities.

At the end of August 2011 there are over 200 VCEs supported by 17 VCE Area Coordinators and seven Mitigation and Education Officers.

The “Smart” category recognises outstanding performance and achievement that contributes to delivery world-class education and training. The Senior School Certificate II program was trialled at Kilcoy State High School, allowing senior students over the age of 16 to nominate to undertake a Certificate II in Public Safety (Firefighting Operations). The students became Registered Juniors at their local brigades and on the vocational education days allocated by the school, the students, led by a Rural Operations qualified trainer/assessor, undertook the theory and practical assessment required to complete their qualification. As part of their course they also attended brigade training nights, community education events, hazard reduction burns and various other activities relating to their studies.

This trial was extremely successful and the program is now being made available at other schools throughout the State.

Graham King, Ian Swadling and Peter Varley accepted the Smart Award on behalf of the QFRS Rural Operations Caboolture Area Office for the program to recruit and retain younger RFS volunteers.
The Australian Safer Communities Awards, sponsored by the Australian Government, recognise innovative practices and achievements across the nation that are making our communities safer, stronger, more disaster resilient and better prepared to manage any emergency situation.

The awards cover all aspects of community safety and resilience with an emergency management focus including:

- risk assessment
- research
- education and training
- information and knowledge management
- prevention, preparedness, response and recovery.

The awards are judged on two levels (excluding the Federal agencies category) – State and Territory winners are decided and recognised first, and in turn become finalists for the National Awards.

Rural Operations entered the Volunteer Community Educator (VCE) initiative under the Volunteer/Community Group category. Acting Assistant Commissioner Paul Adcock is very pleased to announce that the VCE initiative was a State finalist and took home a Highly Commended Award.

Gaeta Rural Fire Brigade also entered their initiative ‘C.O.P Strategy’ under this category, and was presented with an Encouragement Award. The Brigade identified an issue with communication in their community. To combat this, they developed and produced the ‘C.O.P Strategy’, which is based around Communication, Organisation, and Prevention.

The implementation of this strategy has improved communications between the brigade and landholders, enabling the brigade to disseminate information on fire danger ratings, controlled burns, using fire as a management tool, training, brigade activities, improvements that have been made in the community and how to prepare for disasters, not just fire events.
Fire Danger Period

On Tuesday 26 August 2011, the Emergency Services Minister Neil Roberts officially launched a Fire Danger Period (FDP) for Queensland for the period 4 September 2011 – 1 January 2012. It was declared by the Commissioner Queensland Fire and Rescue Service as a result of the potential for increased fire danger throughout the State.

The declaration means that during the period, fires where the material to be burnt is less than two metres in any direction will no longer be exempt and will require a Permit from the local fire warden. Fires used to burn the carcass of a beast, and those lit outdoors for the purpose of cooking and warmth continue to be exempt from requiring a Permit. However, these fires can only be lit without a Permit, provided that adequate precautions are taken to prevent the spread of fire, the lighting of the fire conforms with any local law and, the fire is enclosed in a fireplace so prepared as to prevent the escape of fire or any burning material there from”.

Exemptions associated with the sawmill and cane industries remain in force.

A FDP is not a Fire Ban. A FDP is that time of year during the fire season when uncontrolled fires can be dangerous. One way of looking at it is that the fire season is when vegetation will burn readily, a fire danger period is declared when vegetation fires can be dangerous and a fire ban would be imposed when conditions are such that fires would be difficult to control and pose a danger to communities.

The removal of the exemption on the two metre fires is aimed at limiting the number of fires that get out of control and reducing demands on QFRS response resources during the fire season. During the 2009 fire season, small fires that did not require a Permit were a significant cause of bushfires. This was generally due to the fact that people lighting these fires did not recognise how changing weather conditions can affect fire behaviour or did not exercise appropriate control and supervision of the fire. The requirement for a Permit will provide an opportunity for Fire Wardens to assess the circumstances around the lighting and management of the fire and to develop appropriate Permit conditions or, reject the application.

Feedback from Fire Wardens after the 2010 Fire Danger Period indicated that the requirement to issue Permits to residents wishing to light fires less than two metres did create additional workload. In order to lessen that workload, yet maintain a Fire Warden’s role in proactive fire management.

The following is recommended:

• that Fire Wardens continue to reject or issue Permits on a case by case basis, to those applicants that need their advice (through appropriate conditioning of a Permit); but
• where a Fire Warden is confident of the abilities and responsible attitude of residents that regularly use fire, to continue do so safely, they consider issuing an appropriately conditioned “seasonal” Permit. The duration of the “seasonal” period is at the Fire Warden’s discretion.

Prior to the announcement of the FDP, a letter was sent to all Fire Wardens and Deputy Fire Wardens advising them of the above and including some guidance in relation to advising the public on what constitutes “a fireplace so prepared as to prevent the escape of fire or any burning material there from”. Due to the short notice, many Fire Wardens may not have received these letters until after the start of the FDP and we do apologise for this.

Notification of the FDP was also provided to Area Offices, all QFRS staff via a newsletter, a range of industry bodies, government departments and the 73 Councils in the state.

Further detail about the Fire Danger Period can be found on the Rural Fires website at www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au. Also of interest may be the downloadable “Can I or Can’t I” fact sheet available through the website.
Regional Fire Communications Centres (Firecom) provide emergency incident call taking and despatch services to QFRS within each region. Firecom coordinates operational communications with other emergency services including Queensland Ambulance Service, as well as various units within Emergency Management Queensland and Queensland Police Service.

Firecom Officers are responsible for:

- Accepting incoming fire and rescue incident calls and enquiries and collect relevant information.
- Assessing the risks associated with a situation and the availability and capability of resources to determine the appropriate response and/or resources to be despatched.
- Despatching and coordinating appropriate resources to calls for assistance and notify other organisations in accordance with standard operational procedures.
- Maintaining and updating all incident information in the centre’s CAD system, continually monitor progress, support and liaise with operational staff until completion.
- Completing required post incident administration including provision of information and reports to stations and other agencies and organisations.
- Providing pre-arrival instructions in emergency situations.
- Monitoring alarm signals and respond in accordance within Standard Operating Procedures.
- Providing mentoring and guidance on the job to new staff.
- Contributing to improvement of operational and administrative systems and procedures.
- Identifying systems and technical faults and liaise with technical support staff in relation to reporting, maintaining and updating communications technology.
- Undertaking general administrative and project duties as allocated (e.g. maintaining and updating resource information; conducting weekly tests of appliances, systems and communications; assist in preparation of rosters).
Emergency requests for assistance may come from many areas including off duty Emergency Service personnel, other agencies or the public. Once Firecom has received the call for assistance, they respond the appropriate vehicle that is closest and has the correctly trained officers with the right equipment.

The information from the call is then passed onto the firefighters by way of radio or station turnout for Urban Stations, and pagers and phone calls for Rural Fire Service volunteers and Auxiliaries. Firecom then liaise with the responding crew/s through a series of codes and word back until the incident is closed.

If you haven’t been into a Firecom to see this happen, we recommend and welcome you to book a time to come and visit us. It is a great time to ask questions about your brigade and how and when you are responded.

Whilst it is fantastic to think that we can arrive at an incident within minutes of a 000 phone call and have an outstanding reputation for being first on scene – this only happens through the training of staff, the relevant information/needs given to Firecom and the management of our advanced and intelligent computer system Emergency Services Computer Aided Dispatch (ESCAD) by Firecom Officers.

Important information for Firecom to receive from all QFRS personnel includes:

- Exact location information - correct addresses, town name, cross streets & local identifiers.
- Responding crews & vehicles - Call signs, number of personnel on each responding vehicle, when crews turnout to an incident, word back on an incident, leaving incident, radio codes.

Providing this information aids in the response process and allows for accurate reporting to be achieved.

Communications Support Unit

The Communications Support Unit (CSU) is a team of Firecom Officers and administration professionals who are responsible for providing first tier support for all Regional Firecom Centres with their ESCAD system and a variety of other supporting applications.

As volunteers you must ensure you advise your Area Office if your address or contact details have changed, as this information is automatically transferred into Firecom’s E-Info System. Out of date contact information can severely impact the response time and risk to responding crews.

To update your details, please contact your Area Office on the phone number provided on the back of this Bulletin, or fill in the “Change of Details” form on the mailing sheet included with this Bulletin and return it to Rural Operations.

www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au
National Fire Picture

During the 2011/2012 Australian fire season we may observe large grassfires burning over vast inland areas of rural production and remote areas of inland and central Australia.

The Australian bushfire season is mainly influenced by climate and weather. Long and short-term climate conditions provide the overall setting of rainfall, temperature and solar radiation influencing the seasonal vegetation growth and subsequent conditioning of the vegetation. The shorter weather patterns influence the local conditions and the fire danger. While many parts of Australia receive varying amount of annual rainfall throughout the year there are two distinct rainfall periods commonly referred to as the Northern Wet Season, occurring between October and April inclusive and the Southern Wet Season which occurs between April and November inclusive.

A strong La Niña event developed during spring 2010 and continued through the 2011 Northern Wet Season. Record rainfall caused inundation in many States during the 2010 spring 2011 summer period with considerable widespread rain occurring throughout central Australia. The Southern Wet Season has not run the full period at this time and is showing significant depletion of rainfall over many southern areas to date. The declining phase of the La Niña may contribute to this drying weather pattern.

For most Australian States and Territories the seasonal rainfall and associated riverine flooding increased the soil moisture profile promoting the most prolific growth in native and exotic grassland pastures for decades.

Throughout the landscape, the grassland sward is continuous and has a high vertical structure with grassland curing increasing in the dry north Australian latitudes. These conditions are ideal for grassfires associated with high rates of spread and high intensity making control difficult should ignition occur.
The climate outlook for September to November 2011 indicates an increased chance of below average rainfall in central to southeast South Australia and the adjacent fringes of New South Wales and Victoria. In contrast, a wetter season is more likely in southwest Western Australia and far southwest Queensland. This outlook is largely driven by the Indian Ocean temperature patterns. The maximum temperature outlook shows an increased chance of a warmer than normal season in tropical areas of Northern Australia and a portion of Victoria and South Australia.

Annually operational personnel from fire and land management agencies together with the Bureau of Meteorology climatologists and the Bushfire CRC attend workshops in Northern Australia (June) and Southern Australia (August) to review the vegetation and climate conditions and evaluate the climate outlook effect on the bushfire potential for the Australian bushfire season. Of particular interest are the future tendencies of Pacific sea surface temperature associated with the El Niño-Southern Oscillation, a major climate driver over Australia. Other less quantifiable factors, such as the distribution and readiness of firefighting resources, are also considered.

Bushfire potential is defined as: “The chance of a fire or number of fires occurring of such size, complexity or other impact which requires resources (from both a pre-emptive management and suppression capability) beyond the area in which it or they originate. Fire potential depends on many factors including weather and climate, fuel abundance and availability, recent fire history and fire-fighting resources available in an area.”

Due to the seasonal climate conditions and the abundant body of grass, the 2011/2012 bushfire potential assessment has identified a vast area of Australia with an Above Normal Bushfire Potential with a portion of North-eastern Tasmania of a Below Normal Potential.
Cross-border liaison – being good neighbours

We are all aware that fires know no boundaries and do not just stop on the state borders. It is therefore important we know who our neighbours are across state borders at all levels of our organisation.

To support this there are a number of Cross-Border Liaison Groups established in order to have a good understanding of the operations, capabilities and mutual aid that each of the agencies involved can provide.

There are two key Cross-Border Liaison Groups currently operating.

- The Eastern NSW-QLD Border Liaison Group
- The Western NSW-QLD-SA Border Liaison Group

The Eastern NSW-QLD border liaison group covers an area 10km either side of the QLD-NSW border from Tweed Heads to Mungindi. The agencies involved are:

- QFRS Urban and Rural
- Qld Parks and Wildlife Service
- Forest Plantations Qld
- NSW RFS
- NSW Fire and Rescue
- NSW Parks and Wildlife Service
- NSW Forestry

A Memorandum of Agreement has been established and signed by all Departmental CEO’s, Commissioners and Executive Directors. This agreement outlines operational response procedures and what each state will be responsible for and the roles and responsibilities of fire officers.

This group meets twice a year, pre and post fire season. At these meeting each agency provides to the group their identified fire risks and mitigation programs, their resource capabilities, communication, training and community safety operations.

An outcome from these recent meetings has been:

- The attendance by Qld Rural Fire Brigades to participate in the NSW RFS regional exercises, which the Qd team won last year.
- The inclusion of NSW RFS radio channels in the state-wide VHF program. We have also acknowledged that there are very limited common channels which means that each agency must provide a radio to the brigade coming into the state providing assistance. The CB network is also an alternative.
- There is also a planned IMT exercise in October where all member agencies will participate in a large scale wildfire scenario.

The Western NSW-QLD-SA border liaison group in the past have met once a year which has coincided with the Police and Emergency Services Tri-State conference. More recently the members have been involved in monthly teleconference as the risk in Central Australia this year is high and has the potential to be the worst grassfire season for over 20 years.

The group discuss operations, community safety programs, communications, and grassland fuels that will affect the fire season potential.

A formal Mutual Aid Agreement has been developed and signed by the respective Commissioners and covers the area 100km either side of the state border from Mungindi to the South Australian border.

The key objective of this group at present is to ensure that community safety messages that are being delivered are consistent across all states. Some of the outcomes in this area have been:

- The placement of Fire Danger rating signs along key tourist routes heading into the outback
- The placement of information brochures at all roadhouses and camping areas.
- Placing a PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE. message on petrol bowsers at roadhouses and petrol stations.

We also provide information on risk reduction programs, response activity and the state of grassland fuels so that we can gain an overall perspective of the risk that is currently in Central Australia. A common theme emerging is the movement of crews, both volunteer and permanent staff, and resources into the remote areas to complete hazard reduction programs.

The networking benefits gained by all the operational staff involved in all of the Cross-Border Liaison Groups is so important to ensure operational support around the border areas.

Whilst the Cross-Border Liaison Groups mentioned here are targeted at a strategic middle management level, there is also an opportunity for this to be achieved on a smaller scale by getting to know neighbouring rural fire brigades.

To have already met the people and know the capabilities of their respective organisations makes it so easy to fit into operations. There is no need for ice breakers.

It is all about communication and understanding the people who are your neighbours. They will be the first people you will call for assistance.
Brigade Classifications Review

Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) Rural Operations is currently undertaking a periodic review of the Rural Fire Service (RFS) brigade classifications, with expected completion before October 2011.

RFS brigade classifications are the critical descriptors that benchmark key aspects of the capability and capacity of a rural fire brigade. The classification reflects the brigade’s ability to effectively serve and assist its community and is broadly based on the community risk profile, which collectively provides an indicative performance measure of the contribution by the RFS to improving community safety across Queensland. Conversely the viability of a rural fire brigade (RFB) is also a measure of the community capacity to support its local brigade. This is reflected in levels of membership, equipment and community engagement.

Brigade classifications were previously reviewed in 2008 following a significant organisational enhancement package that effectively restructured and redefined the role of Rural Operations. Because of the importance of the brigade classifications to the RFS, it is therefore essential to consider the scope and benefits of a periodic review for all partners involved in the function of the RFS. These partners include QFRS, RFS volunteers and the broader community of Queensland.

The aim is to ensure the Queensland RFS remains a defined and capable community safety organisation.

Brigade Classification descriptors are required to articulate the organisational standards of service delivery, provided through a resource model utilising a defined volunteer workforce with the appropriate skills and training for the relevant generic community risk profile. To ensure the 2011 review of the brigade classifications addresses the critical components of purpose and function, the following criteria is identified as essential points of reference for review and evaluation:

- Community risk profile. The evaluation of specific variances such as vegetation type, topography and residential density, considered against the probability of risk to the community and proximity of other specialist QFRS services.
- Community Fire Safety and Prevention Education programs and initiatives. These include Volunteer Community Educators, Volunteer Bushfire Investigators, and PREPARE.ACT. SURVIVE. All of these are now leading examples of improving community resilience through the RFS.
- Volunteer RFB Structures. The RFB structure must provide for adequate numbers of volunteer fire crew members and support personnel commensurate to the community risk profile.
- Volunteer RFB skill sets for risk and response safety. The combined skill set of each brigade membership must be adequate to ensure command and control systems that deliver the best outcomes to community safety.
- Volunteer RFB resource model for fire appliance allocation, including numbers and type, to mitigate risk as determined in the community risk profile.
- Volunteer RFB response capability profile based on an ‘All Hazards’ response and community assistance capability. The reliance on volunteer firefighters is increasing and expanding beyond the traditional role of firefighting to now include response and recovery to assist the community during and after natural disaster events. Skills and resources of RFS volunteers will continue to feature in fire, flood, cyclone and earthquake events.

Standardised Systems and Processes

QFRS has developed a range of policy and procedures that are applied across the organisation as the benchmark standard for practice and governance. Listed below are a number of examples that are implemented across the entire RFS from state to station.

- Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990
- QFRS Operations Doctrine & ZEROharm
- Rural Fire Brigade Manual & Brigade Management Rules
- QFRS Rural Operations – Functional Units
- A single Volunteer Learning and Development Framework
- State Fire Appliance replacement & Build Program
- State Air Operations Unit – Policy and structure
- State Radio Communication Network and Equipment
- Volunteer Community Educator
- Volunteer Bushfire Investigator
- Rural Operations Area Office structure for provision of Training and Support services

Characteristics of Rural Fire Service Brigades

Each RFS Brigade has:

- Defined geographic boundaries
- Defined number of competent volunteer members in various functions and roles
- Defined cache of firefighting resources i.e. appliances and operational equipment
- A vital community fire safety education role in their local community
- Operational command and control capability for hazard mitigation (FMG), emergency response, wildfire investigation
Rural Fire Brigade Groups enhance fire management over an entire local government area through cooperative effort by brigades in addressing issues such as hazard mitigation, training, and incident management. Additionally, Groups may provide a single focus for dealing with the local authority in matters such as the rural fire levy. Office Bearers of the Group are elected from the member brigades at an annual general meeting.

Following the Local Authority amalgamations and the results of the Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission there is a far greater focus being applied to community education, prevention, preparedness and community resilience. These events provide an opportunity to conduct a review of the structure, process, procedures and requirements pertaining to Rural Fire Brigade Groups.

The Assistant Commissioner Rural Operations directed the Regional Manager Rural Operations Brisbane Region to begin a review of the Rural Fire Brigade Group functions and investigate the available options for realigning the functions of the Group to ensure that they are functioning appropriately in support of member Brigades and QFRS Rural Operations Area Offices.

The Group structure has operated successfully across many areas of the State since 1995. QFRS Rural Operations maintains the position that the Group is not functionally operational and the Group Officer competencies should reflect the management and coordination function of the position.

Notwithstanding the intent of the original purpose, the Group functions across the State are not consistent and there are currently no formal reporting procedures and reporting hierarchy.

The review will include a review of funding requirements and establishment processes for Groups, including the development of a reporting system detailing the process for Group Officers to report to Area Directors. Clear guidelines are also required on the collection, distribution and accountability of funds. The Local Area Finance Committee (LAFC), where that group is convened, would be seen as the logical area for the collection, distribution and management of brigade funds.

To progress the initial steps of the review a small team of staff and brigade personnel was convened to work through the initial proposal. The team reviewed the Group functional role and responsibilities and has documented a number of proposals that will be taken forward for consideration and discussion by a much wider representative group.
Discussion

Group Function

- The role and functioning of Groups is accepted and valued by QFRS Rural Operations. However, over time the role of the Groups has evolved depending upon the requirements of the member Brigades and Regional/Area management strategies, which has resulted in inconsistencies in Group practices across the state. There are currently no formal reporting procedures and reporting hierarchy. QFRS Rural Operations is looking to the future to achieve more effective, consistent and accountable Rural Fire Brigade Groups across the State.

- The Group structure is not an additional administrative or management layer for Rural Fire Brigades. Individual Brigades still maintain a direct link with the Rural Operations Area Director and Area Office. Neither the Group, nor office bearers in the Group, form a chain of command between member Brigades and Rural Operations Area Office or during incidents. The Group will only be part of a chain of command during operational incidents when directed.

Response: The review team accepted the QFRS position in regard to the role and function of the groups.

Group Officer Role

- In many Areas the role of the Group Officer has been seen as "operational" and the elected officers have a level of operational experience and knowledge. The operational role of the Group is a function of the Group Officer’s capability and/or the Area Director Rural Operations and member Brigade’s philosophy to that role.

- There is no requirement for the Group Officer to have operational competencies. i.e. Group Officer’s role as last recorded in the 2007 Brigade Manual (D 9.1 Rural Fire Brigade Groups - not reviewed) outlines the duties of the Office Bearers - The Group Officers prime role is to ensure coordination of activities in support of Rural Fire Brigades in the Group.

- Group Officers have been traditionally elected by member Brigades without reference to the need for specific skills. In many cases the members are biased toward those persons with an operational competence and people without operational experience are not encouraged to apply.

Response: The review team accepted that the role of the Group Officer is one of coordination and administration. Higher level fire fighter competencies are not a prerequisite for the position. Candidates require proven skills in administration, planning and logistics. A Group Officer Role Description should be developed to determine the required competencies. The position of Group Officer should be advertised within the volunteer ranks. Candidates would apply addressing the selection criteria and would be selected by the QFRS Rural Operations Regional and Area staff, through a formal recruitment process.

Response: The Review team accepted that the role of the Group Officer will have a formal reporting line to the Rural Operations Area Director.

Additional considerations

1. Volunteer Functional Roles

To ensure higher levels of support and coordination to Brigades, QFRS Rural Operations proposes specific roles be added to the Group’s functions. The roles would have identified competencies and the candidates would be selected by the QFRS Rural Operations Regional and Area staff through a formal recruitment process. The roles would be linked to QFRS functional areas and would be supported by a State sponsor.

Such functional roles could include:

- Workplace Health and Safety Officer
  - Sponsor – Rural Operations Senior WH&S Officer

- Peer Support Officer
  - Sponsor – Director Rural Volunteering and Support

- Volunteer Community Educator Support Officer
  - Sponsor – Mitigation and Education Officer (Brisbane Region)

Response: The review team supports the concept of volunteer functional roles.

2. Area Groups

QFRS Rural Operations proposes Area Groups be formed, where appropriate, to coordinate administration and operational response and the proposed new volunteer functional roles within the Group. The concept of an Area Group would have the specialist volunteer support positions reporting to one coordinator, the Area Group Officer. The Area Group Officer would be required to meet the requirements of a Role Description and would be selected by the QFRS Rural Operations Regional and Area staff, through a formal recruitment process. The Area Group Officer would have a formal reporting line to the Area Director Rural Operations.

Where the Area Group is not appropriate or workable, the volunteer functional roles would be incorporated into the existing Group Structure.

Response: The review team supports the concept however believes the implementation will be limited by geographical coverage in some areas.

The review of the Rural Fire brigade groups is not limited to the specific points raised in this brief; however they are the initial steps to moving groups into the next stage of development. The Assistant Commissioner’s vision is to see the groups become integrated into the Rural Operations Area Management team.
Australia Bushfire Season Outlook 2011 -2012

Each year, members from the Bushfire CRC, Australia’s Fire Services and Land Management Agencies and the Bureau of Meteorology meet in two separate workshops to discuss bushfire potential for Northern and Southern Australia for the coming fire season.

The Seasonal Bushfire Outlook provides information on fire potential that can be used by fire authorities to prepare for the coming fire season. For more information on the Australian Bushfire Season Outlook for the upcoming fire season look for the follow up article in this issue, visit the RFS Volunteer Portal or go to the Bushfire CRC website (www.bushfirecrc.com).

Fire Danger Rating Review

The Bushfire CRC, in conjunction with the Attorney General’s department and various State and Territory Fire Agencies, are working towards the development of a new Fire Danger Rating System to assist Australian fire agencies to better plan for and respond to fires.

Since the last edition of the Bulletin, the Bushfire CRC has produced several research report updates and the Rural Operations research team is currently busy analysing these to ensure all relevant information is captured.

Funding for the five year project has been provided by the Australian Government under the National Emergency Management Program and the Bushfire CRC has appointed a Project Manager to oversee the review and research program. The program aims to assist Australian communities to better prepare for, respond to and recover from natural disasters and emergencies.

Australian Fire and Land Management agencies currently use a Forest and Grass Fire Danger Index (FDI) to assess the fire risk. The FDI is based around the conditions required for a fire to start and continue burning. However, the FDI calculations used in the current system do not take into account factors such as topography, fuel availability and fire location which in turn influences risk management and firefighting decision making processes.

Once completed, the new fire danger rating system will most likely be based around a series of modules, including elements such as weather indices and damage potential that can be used to measure and calculate various aspects of fire risk such as:

- Fire weather indices;
- Fire behaviour indices;
- Fire damage indices;
- Ignition factors; and
- Social factors.

Rural Operations Research & Training is taking part in the review process and will provide project updates as they become available.
ATO legislation on DGR status

In December 2010, Commonwealth legislative changes were enacted which affect the Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status held by some brigades.

DGR status was granted by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) as a result of a brigade registering as a Public Benevolent Institution (PBI). This status enabled the brigade to receive tax deductible donations.

Brigades with DGR status have received correspondence in the latter half of the year from the ATO advising that volunteer rural fire brigades in Australia no longer qualify as PBIs, and that PBI status will be revoked by the ATO during 2011/12.

Despite the fact that volunteer rural fire brigades are no longer regarded as PBIs, the Commonwealth has been working with fire agencies across Australia to ensure they continue to have the opportunity to raise money through tax deductible donations.

Amendments to the Commonwealth’s income tax legislation were passed in December 2010 that provides avenues by which volunteer rural fire brigades can continue to receive tax deductible donations. Under this legislation, eligible brigades will have the following options:

- It can choose not to have DGR status, which means any donations made to the brigade are not tax deductible for the donor;
- It can establish, with approval from the ATO, an individual Public Fund, which will allow the brigade to continue to receive tax deductible donations; or
- It may act as an agent of a Public Fund established by the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS), which would also enable the brigade to continue to receive tax deductible donations.

If you are a Secretary, Treasurer or First Officer of a brigade with DGR status, you will have received a letter from Rural Operations in late August with preliminary information on the actions necessary to establish an individual Public Fund for the brigade, or become an agent of the QFRS Public Fund. Please contact your Area Office if you have not received this letter.

If your brigade is not currently registered for DGR status and would like more information, please contact your Area Office.

Project Fuse Aerial Suppression Experiments - Final Report released

Aerial suppression can play an important role in any bushfire suppression strategy. Due to the high cost of operating aircraft and supporting their logistical requirements, the safe and effective use of aerial suppression resources is essential. Project Fuse has been designed to improve aerial suppression capability by testing the effectiveness of different fire suppression chemicals delivered by aircraft.

The experiments were carried out at Ngarkat Conservation Park in South Australia. The area was considered ideal for aerial suppression work due to its mallee heath vegetation and its use for an existing CRC fuel and fire dynamics research project. Three separate fires were used, each starting from a long ignition line to facilitate full fire development in a short period of time before suppression was attempted. The only suppression applied to these fires came from two AT-802 Air Tractors (single engine, 3000 litre air tankers), dropping a single suppressant type directly at the fire edge at each of the three fires. For the Fuse experiments the trials were conducted using foam, water enhancing gel and retardant.

Due to a range of burning conditions experienced for the different drops and the varying fire behaviour during the experiments did not facilitate a direct comparison of the suppression chemicals. Nevertheless, the aerial suppression experiments produced valuable data for assessing aerial suppression methodology and inform future training material. The experiments emphasised the importance of adequate ground coverage levels, drop coverage, drop accuracy and drop placement with regard to fire behaviour and location and for stopping fire propagation.

A full copy of the final report is available on the Bushfire CRC website. (www.bushfirecrc.com).
Energex has committed $75,000 to the Rural Fire Service to be spent on equipment for brigades in Brisbane and the South East.

The Esk group, which consists of 18 brigades, was presented with a trailer filled with emergency gear at a ceremony at the Prenzlau Rural Fire Brigade station on 26 July.

It was a prelude to multiple equipment handovers in coming months designed to provide Rural Fire Service volunteers with essential resources.

Police, Corrective Services and Emergency Services Minister Neil Roberts said he was pleased Energex had renewed its sponsorship agreement and the equipment would benefit not only RFS volunteers but also the communities they served.

‘Energex has long supported the Rural Fire Service and this agreement offers brigades the opportunity to apply for a range of approved items that will assist them to undertake mitigation, response and education activities within their communities,’ Mr Roberts said.

‘The inaugural sponsorship program in 2009-10 supported a total of 35 brigades with essential items and we hope to see just as many benefit from this new round of grants.’

QFRS Commissioner Lee Johnson said successful Rural Fire Service brigades would be provided with items such as transportable marquees, portable fridges, generators and lighting tower kits, eskees and portable pumps.

‘This donation will go a long way to help our Rural Fire Service volunteers best serve and protect the community right throughout the year, especially during the upcoming bushfire season,’ he said.

Energex Chief Executive Officer Terry Effeney said the electricity distributor was proud to back the local rural firefighters and commended the volunteers for their commitment to the community.

‘The job of a rural firefighter is not an easy one,’” he said.

‘They don’t do it for notoriety and they certainly don’t do it for financial gain. They do it to ensure their communities are better and safer places to live and Energex hopes the donated equipment makes their very difficult job a little easier.’
Grants and Subsidies

Rural Operations provides a number of grants and subsidies schemes to assist volunteer groups to purchase required resources to assist with their volunteer roles and response capacity.

The Rural Fire Service provides $150,000 per annum for station grants up to $10,000 for construction or refurbishment projects. To access a grant of up to $10,000, make an application on a Fire Station Construction Grant Application Form, sending it to your Area Director Rural Operations, giving maximum advance notice of the grant request. More information can be found in the Brigade Manual D3.7.4 Station Grants.

Additionally, brigades are eligible to seek grant funding via the Gambling Community Benefit Fund (GCBF) and Jupiter’s Casino Benefit Fund (JCBF) administered by the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation (OLGR) which is part of the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation during four annual funding rounds. The successful brigade recipients may apply the monies to offset the cost of an appliance or complement a specific project. More information on the GCBF and JCBF can be found in the RFB Manual – D3.7.1 and D3.7.2.

Operation Zephyr: the Commissioner's Intent

On 1 August 2011 the Commissioner issued a Standing Order entitled 'Fire Season 2011 Operation Zephyr: Commissioner's Intent'. This Standing Order guides the activities of brigades and stations during operations to achieve the best outcome for all Queenslanders.

The Commissioner’s Intent is derived from the military concept of Commanders Intent, a long standing tool used to guide local commanders’ decision making in chaotic situations. The Commissioner recognises that the brigades and stations of the fire service are made up of highly skilled and experienced people. Every firefighter understands the doctrine and mission under which QFRS operates. However even the best made plans can be made quickly redundant in the chaotic battle against the fire.

The Commissioner's Intent describes what the community should look like after the fire. It empowers local commanders to use initiative, improvisation and adaptation to ensure that the outcome is achieved.

The military version, the Commander's Intent, has been used by armies the world over, for many years. During World War II the D-Day invasion of France, which had been planned for many years, involved airborne troops practicing for parachute and glider insertions into France. The plan was to secure key bridges, road junctions and positions of advantage ahead of the invading ground forces. Despite the detailed plans and months of practice, parachute forces dropped into unmarked landing zones and gliders landed in the wrong areas. Thousands of troops from different units were mixed together in the night.

Despite the apparent confusion, the Commander's Intent took over. Through a clear understanding that key areas must be secured to assist the ground forces, the troops formed together into ad hoc units and executed the mission to achieve the outcome.

The Commissioner’s Intent details the mission for QFRS, allowing Incident Controllers to understand what the outcome must be and allowing them to use initiative to make decisions which lead to the objective.

Copies of the Standing Order are available on the Volunteer Portal or from your Area Office. Brigade Officers should know and understand the Commissioner’s Intent and use it when briefing crews.

More awards for GIS

The annual Queensland Spatial Excellence Awards 2011 were held in Brisbane in August.

Presented by the Surveying and Spatial Sciences Institute (SSSI) and Spatial Industries Business Association (SIBA), these prestigious awards acknowledge those at the forefront of the spatial industry across Queensland. Nominations come from a diverse range of individuals as well as private, public and academic sector organisations.

This year QFRS brought home the Industry Award in the “Spatially Enabling Government” category for the use of web-based and mobile mapping to deliver critical real-time incident information to aid planning and emergency response activities during the recent Queensland floods and Cyclone Yasi.

As a winner of a Queensland award QFRS are automatically nominated into the Asia Pacific Spatial Excellence Awards to be held in Canberra in November.
Mapping Coordinates

Mapping coordinates can be represented in a number of ways and the most suitable representation will vary depending on the situation.

The most widely recognised coordinates are latitude and longitude (geographic coordinates) and within QFRS they are represented in two ways.

### Degrees Minutes Seconds

- **Latitude:** S 26° 53’ 48”
- **Longitude:** E 152° 53’ 01”

### Decimal Degrees

- **Latitude:** -26.897
- **Longitude:** 152.884

For decimal degrees a negative symbol is used to indicate southern latitude. A common error is forgetting the negative symbol when typing latitude coordinates. If entering data or doing a search and the result is unexpectedly somewhere in the northern hemisphere, there’s a good chance this is the problem.

Another way of representing coordinates is in Eastings and Northings (grid coordinates). QFRS uses the Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) coordinate system in which the earth is divided into 60 zones, and each zone is divided further into a grid with equally spaced horizontal and vertical lines.

UTM coordinates can be given in two ways and must always include the zone number. A six figure grid reference must also reference the grid square and map number (if relevant, this information is included on a map).

### Eastings and Northings

- **Zone:** 56
- **Eastings:** 402315m
- **Northings:** 7063205m

Six figure grid reference: 56J MR 023632

Queensland spans zones 54-56 so if the zone is unknown or the task spans more than one zone a geographic coordinate system (using latitude and longitude) may be a more appropriate choice.

It’s not essential to understand in great detail the differences in coordinate systems (you’ll usually be instructed on which one to use) but it is important to be able to recognise differences and be familiar with the terminology. If using a GPS receiver or operating mapping software such as OziExplorer, it is also important to know how to change the coordinate display. This will assist effective communications with operators who may be using different coordinates.

Further information can be found in the Brigade Mapping Toolset on the Volunteer Portal.
All Hazards, All Agencies approach

Queensland’s summer of sorrow has reinforced the need for all emergency services and government agencies to work together to support our communities in times of need. Each service specialises in their area of responsibility, with training and equipment tailored to the area of specialisation. Operational procedures and structures have been developed over years of practice and experience to meet the services needs. However in times of disaster, each service and agency needs help to perform effectively.

Through the disaster management arrangements in Queensland, an all hazards, all agencies approach is taken to bring together the resources available to support communities. In most cases agencies have adopted the Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System (AIIMS) as the structure under which emergencies and disaster scale events are managed. A cornerstone of AIIMS is ‘command within agencies’ where it is recognised that the best people to direct agency people is the agency leaders, under the control of the lead agency.

Where personnel are asked to undertake tasks they are not familiar with, or specifically trained for, they must take care to work in partnership with the recognised agency for those tasks. The lead agency are best placed to undertake risk assessments and provide specific equipment, tools and instruction to ensure tasks are conducted safely. In addition, the lead agency has a need to know what emergencies or requests for assistance have been responded to, and completed, to avoid doubling up and wasting resources. At the local level, before disaster management structures are in place, this is done through direct contact with your counterparts in the other agencies.

Tasks such as fording flood waters to reach a rescue scene have inherent dangers. We are all familiar with the risks involved with fast flowing water, rapidly rising creeks and streams and unknown depths of water. After the flood waters have receded we have all seen the damaged road surfaces, washouts and damaged bridges left behind. Whilst local knowledge can provide a good understanding of what depth the water is, and what the flow speed may be, it cannot tell us what the road surface is like or whether a bridge is intact.

Queensland Fire and Rescue Service is one of the largest emergency trained and prepared agencies in Queensland with the most widely spread membership. As such we can provide valuable support to our partner agencies in many locations across the state. Whilst providing that support we must recognise the specialisation that we are trained for and the high level of skill and knowledge our partner agencies have. Working together in partnership, recognising specialisations and developing local networks will help us respond safely to all hazards.
Did you know what is available on the Volunteer Portal now?

The Volunteer Portal contains a wealth of resources for you as a Rural Fire Service (RFS) volunteer. New features and materials are added regularly to help keep you up to date with what is happening in the RFS, Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) as a whole, the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre and much more!

**Commissioners Update**
The Commissioner, QFRS, regularly produces a newsletter with important information you need to know. These are now available to download from the “News 4 You” page. An Archive page has also been created, allowing you to find past editions of the newsletter dating back to January 2010.

**Standing Orders**
A Standing Order is used within QFRS for communicating new or changed policy, instructions and/or urgent or critical information that is relevant to all QFRS functions (both operational and non-operational). It is used to communicate information that is not currently covered in existing policy or processes. Standing Orders can be downloaded from the Operations page.

**Rural Research & Training**
The Rural Research Unit provides specialist fire research expertise in rural and forest landscapes. Information about case studies, guidelines and current projects can be found on their page.

**Area Pages**
Your Area office has their own page which they update with information specifically for you and your brigade. You can find information about upcoming training and events and much more.

We will continue to add and improve the Volunteer Portal and would appreciate your feedback. If there is something you would like to see, or see done differently, please click the “Feedback” link on the Volunteer Portal and send us a message.

**News Desk**
The News Desk is a You Tube like concept featuring fortnightly video clips on latest news and information. To date presenters include volunteers, QFRS staff as well as people external to the organisation. The clips run for around four minutes, but a transcript can also be downloaded if you prefer to read than watch.
Developing our Safety Culture

What is a Safety Culture?

There are many definitions of a “Safety Culture” however the most appropriate is:

‘A Safety Culture is the product of individual and group values, attitudes, perceptions, competencies and patterns of behaviour that determine the commitment to an organisations Health and Safety management’.

Attitude and Behaviour

Attitude and behaviour are key elements of developing a Safety Culture and are personal attributes that we as individuals can influence and change. Attitude can be best described as the way that we think and feel about things and behaviour is what we do and how we act.

As humans we instinctively try to avoid being injured or causing ourselves or others harm or pain but we sometimes behave in a manner that can cause an accident and a subsequent injury. Why is this? There are usually two reasons. One reason may be a lack of knowledge or understanding of the task or situation. What you don’t know can hurt you. The second reason we may act in a risky manner is our attitude. Our attitude affects almost all that we do and how we do it. Our attitude affects our behaviour.

If we have a positive attitude towards all that we do and in particular safety rules and procedures we will also behave more safely. We are not perfect and we are all capable of making mistakes or errors of judgement. To improve our safety we must follow our safety rules and procedures and just as importantly we must look out for each other. Have the courage to tell someone if they are not working safely or are putting themselves at risk. If someone tells you that you are not working safely don’t become defensive or angry, be positive and thank them, they are just looking out for your welfare.

The key driver to most incidents and accidents is our attitude and behaviour. Take a moment to reflect on any incidents or accidents that you have had or been involved in. Not just at work, it might be at home, on the farm or at play. Think of how attitude and behaviour contributed and how a more positive attitude or a different behaviour might have resulted in a different outcome.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

PPE is provided for our safety and must be worn to ensure we stay safe. The Wildfire fire fighting jacket and trousers provided are treated with a flame retardant called Proban. They are not flame proof and can burn if exposed to direct flames. Damaged or poorly maintained PPE can significantly reduce the intended level of protection and expose the wearer to risk of injury. Ensure PPE is regularly inspected and properly maintained. Refer to the Rural Fire Brigade Manual and business rules D6.2 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and D6.2.1 Care and Maintenance of PPE for guidance.

Always remember - In order to protect the community we must first protect ourselves.

RFB Manual Changes

With each edition of the Bulletin we will provide you with a summary of updates and changes made to Rural Fire Brigade Manual Business Rules.

MAJOR CHANGES

A new business rule has been released and is included in this edition of the Bulletin for you to add to your Brigade Manual.

This business rule is: A1.3 - Manage Road & Rail Corridor Fire Risk.
Equipment Update

Equipment catalogue

The 2011/2012 equipment catalogue has been released and is available in hard copy and electronic format on the volunteer portal.

Please contact your Area Office if you have not received a copy of the new catalogue or require additional information regarding the availability of equipment.

Brigade secretaries are asked to ensure that the correct stock codes are included on the requisition and that the brigade details including the required street delivery address are clear and legible.

Election Commitment Funding - Fire Curtains

The “Support our Heroes” Election Commitment funding has seen over 250 sets of fire curtains fitted to appliances throughout the state.

The deployment of these curtains should be restricted to emergency action when required during exposure to a “burnover” situation as well as deployment training and maintenance activities.

“Burnover Safety and Survival” is a comprehensive video on pre deployment operational considerations, safe use of fire curtains and personal blankets as well as routine maintenance and care, and is available on the Volunteer Portal in Series Three of the Training Toolbox.

Brigades are urged to view this training video and be familiar with the requirements of fire curtain use.

QFRS Engineering Services Command

The design, contract management, construction and commissioning of all rural appliances will transition to the QFRS Engineering Services Command to provide a consistent level of technological expertise across the broader QFRS fleet.

Engineering Services Command will undertake the 2011-2012 appliance build of twenty medium appliances as well as the new specification, contract and construction of the next four Rural Tankers as part of the Election Commitment Funding.

Water Hammer

With the installation of the new diesel pumps a number of reports of water hammer damage have been noted.

To avoid this type of damage, it is critical that pump operators ensure that all water valves are operated slowly to allow for a gradual decrease in water pressure and not a quick shut down of the water flow.

Water hammer may result in damage to the pump, plumbing and couplings which may jeopardise the pump performance and operational activities.
Manual Starting of Diesel Pumpsets

Brigade members should be aware that the new diesel engines have a higher compression ratio and caution should be taken when attempting manual starting if the battery or electrics fail. The higher diesel engine compression would normally make it harder for a manual start however the manual activation of a decompression valve enables the compression to be reduced for ease of starting. The owners manual supplied with the Yanmar diesel engine has a dedicated section with instructions on how to safely manual start the engine and should be adhered to at all times.

The Subaru diesel engine has an automatic decompression valve which reduces the engine compression for easier and safer manual starting.

Diesel Engine Fuel Bleeding

In situations where the diesel fuel supply has been interrupted it may be necessary to bleed the fuel system with the Subaru pumpset fitted to the medium attack appliances.

However, the Yanmar pumpsets fitted to the light appliances have an automatic fuel bleed system and do not normally require additional manual bleeding.

Diesel pump-set, refuelling and bleeding

- Always stop the engine before refuelling.
- Use standard diesel fuel.
- Check fuel is clean and fresh, with no impurities or water. Fuel injection pumps and nozzles may become clogged if contaminated fuel is used.
- Clean up any spilt fuel before restarting engine.
- Fuel system bleeding may be required to remove air from the fuel lines. Bleeding may be required when:
  1. Starting a new engine for the first time.
  2. Restarting an engine after running out of fuel.
  3. Starting an engine after fuel system maintenance.

- Fuel system bleeding procedure:
  4. Open the fuel cock.
  5. Loosen the air vent screw on the fuel injection pump, allow fuel to flow until bubbles no longer appear. Retighten air vent screw.
  7. Start engine as normal.
## 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>
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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>Maryborough Area Office</td>
<td>(07) 4190 4839</td>
<td>(07) 4190 4853</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 1945</td>
<td>(07) 4616 1939</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>
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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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<td><strong>Far Northern Region</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cairns Area Office</td>
<td>(07) 4042 5468</td>
<td>(07) 4051 2017</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>
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<tr>
<td>Charters Towers/Cloncurry Area Office</td>
<td>(07) 4761 5130</td>
<td>(07) 4787 4708</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Central Region</strong></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>
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<td>(07) 4982 0001</td>
<td>(07) 4651 1803</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rockhampton Area Office</td>
<td>(07) 4938 4736</td>
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