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Fire Warden FAQ
It has been a long and arduous fire season throughout all parts of Queensland, with weather conditions fluctuating from one extreme to the next.

At the time of writing, Queensland is still a state of extremes, with severe fire weather warnings current in the West, and severe weather warnings and floods current in the East.

Over the last two years, vegetation has grown and debris has remained from the 2010-11 floods. The now dry vegetation has led to a high fuel load across the State, and combined with extreme hot and dry conditions have added to the threat of bushfires.

This season we’ve seen lightning strikes cause a lot of fires and unfortunately in many areas this has seen properties destroyed.

I would like to thank every volunteer for the endless hours you have dedicated to protecting your community. From the Volunteer Community Educators who door knocked residents in the vicinity of emerging threats, to the behind the scenes crews who brought refreshments, to the firefighters on the ground – you have shown your community the vital role Rural Fire Service volunteers play, and the community are proud.

I’d also like to acknowledge the Fire Wardens. Your task is sometimes a thankless one, but the State of Queensland is indebted to you. I know your role can be difficult when landholders have a differing point of view, but you should know that the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service and Rural Fire Service stand proudly behind you. The work you do in ensuring the safe use of fire helps to protect all Queenslanders from uncontrolled fires.

To the crews currently on the ground, whether it is battling fires or cleaning up flooded towns, thank you. Stay safe, keep well hydrated, and look out for each other. The Queensland community joins me in expressing sincere thanks for the work you have done, and will continue to do. The flood clean-up work is draining, both physically and emotionally, as the crews come face to face with residents that have lost everything.

We also thank your families and employers for their understanding of your dedication to protecting your community.

Finally, I hope that you are enjoying the 2013 Rural Fire Service calendar. The 40 young volunteers who appear in its pages want to make a difference to Queensland, like we all do. As we move out of operational firefighting duties, please take the time to nurture and train any new recruits who are now interested in helping you protect your community after seeing you in action this fire season. Young volunteers are our future. While Gen ‘X’ and Gen ‘Y’ may see things different to us older generation, they share our desire to help Queensland communities. Please do everything you can to make their Rural Fire volunteer experience a positive one.

Now is also the time to reflect, debrief, and learn how we can all improve our skills before preparations for the 2013-14 fire season begin in a few months’ time.
The decision to have a focus on wildfire and severe weather was justified in early January 2013. Tropical Cyclone Oswald formed in the Gulf of Carpentaria, and after making landfall became a low pressure system that dumped significant rain over Cape York. The system moved south along the Queensland Coast and caused flooding from Cairns to the border. Major flooding occurred in Bundaberg, Maryborough, Gympie, and towns west to the Great Dividing Range. Eidsvold, Mundubbera, and Gayndah had residents evacuated. In the southern part of the State, Dalby, Chinchilla, Killarney, and Warwick suffered flooding. With parts of Brisbane and Ipswich City also experiencing flooding.

As all this was occurring, Rural Fire Brigades in the western parts of Queensland were still dealing with severe fire weather conditions and attending fire incidents. The towns of Richmond, Cloncurry, Mount Isa, Boulia, Winton, Longreach, Barcaldine, Birdsville and Quilpie and their surrounding areas, have had no relief from the heat and dry conditions. So Queensland has had severe fire weather warnings in the west and severe weather warnings in the east, both being issued at the same time.

During the extended fire season, brigades and landholders have attended fires in nearly every part of the state. Although a number of townships were threatened, there were no major property losses. Stock feed losses occurred in parts of the State with major losses in the Cape York area, particularly the Etheridge Local Government Area. On the workplace health and safety front there were no serious injuries reported, which is a credit to our volunteers commitment to keeping themselves and their fellow fire fighters safe. The majority of incidents involved heat stress and dehydration. This serves as a reminder to keep your fluid intake up, and learn to recognise the symptoms of heat stress in yourself and others.

Two other incidents worth noting occurred when appliances parked on a road during fire fighting operations were struck by vehicles. Please make sure you do everything possible to alert approaching traffic if you are unable to get your appliance off the roadway.

At the time of writing this article, Rural Strike Teams were preparing for the flood clean up and recovery efforts in the affected towns and cities. Volunteer Community Educators were preparing to accompany the teams to give and collect information in the communities.

The work being carried out by Rural Fire Brigades, both in combating fires and assisting with flood activities, highlights the dedication and adaptability of our volunteers. It demonstrates that Rural Fire Brigades are the mainstay for delivering emergency services to rural communities and provide vital support to operations in the city areas.

Thank you for your commitment to the communities of Queensland both in protecting them from harm and assisting them to recover from disasters.

Most importantly – keep yourself safe.

Peter Varley
Acting Chief Superintendent
Director Rural Operations
Queensland Fire & Rescue Service
Balancing work and volunteering

The commitment of volunteers is greatly valued, however it is acknowledged that your involvement in emergency operations is voluntary and you are not expected to be available at all times. Nor should you place your employment and livelihood at risk to partake in voluntary duties. The support structure of the whole of Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) allows the flexibility to coordinate the resources needed in balance with the time volunteers are able to commit.

Legislative protections

QFRS volunteers enjoy appropriate protections under legislation. The actual arrangements that apply to you will depend on whether your employer operates under the State or Federal legislation, and includes the Industrial Relations Act 1999 and the Fair Work Act 2009. Both provide protection from unfair dismissal due to temporary absences from work by a member of a Rural Fire Brigade attending an emergency situation. Key aspects of the protection provided under this legislation are that the period of absence from work is reasonable and that some notice and evidence are provided.

With this in mind, the Department of Community Safety (DCS) always encourages its volunteers to negotiate suitable leave arrangements with their employers prior to the need to attend an emergency as a volunteer. These arrangements may be informal, such as a verbal agreement or may need to be made more formally in writing.

Employer incentives

The DCS acknowledges the significant contribution to the community made by employers when releasing staff from work responsibilities to respond to emergencies. Businesses release their staff at their own cost, and an employer must give consideration to the operability of their business when considering employee leave.

As an incentive and in recognition of their support, employers whose staff members volunteer for the DCS are offered an exemption on payroll tax for the hours staff spend away from work serving the community. This exemption recognises the importance of volunteers and the commitment of employers for allowing staff to take time away from work to assist in emergency operations.

If you would like to discuss this further, please contact your Area Office.

Show and Tell

We love to see what your brigade gets up to.

If you’re a keen photographer, or just the occasional snapper, contact us at rural.operations@dcs.qld.gov.au.

Send in your photos and yours might make the next Bulletin cover shot!
New brochure available: Information for Landholders

The latest brochure to be released from the Fire Warden Review Team is Information for Landholders. This brochure replaces a brochure titled Notes for Landholders.

The brochure contains a brief outline of the relevant parts of the Fire and Rescue Service Act 1990 and the Fire and Rescue Service Regulation 2011. The explanations are not intended to be exhaustive and if any Section of the Act is not fully understood, enquiries should be made at your Area Office.

The information in this brochure specifically refers to the control of fire in the open, and does not apply in respect to the lighting of a fire inside a building.

Please note: this brochure was printed before the amendment to the 72 hour notification requirement. Once stock levels are exhausted, the brochure will be reprinted with this amendment. For more information on the 72 hour requirement please see the “Frequently asked Fire Warden related questions” article in this Bulletin.

This brochure can be ordered in bundles of 25 through your Area Office. An electronic version is available to download from the Volunteer Portal.

Thank you, Energex!

As we announced in previous editions of the Bulletin, Energex has supported Rural Fire Brigades in Caboolture, Caloundra, and Ipswich areas with $75,000 worth of equipment.

In 2012-13, brigades within the above areas were able to nominate to receive equipment such as: Portable Pumps; Generators; Lighting Plants; Chainsaws; and GPS and Kestrel Weather Meter kits.

56 brigades were successful in receiving at least one of the pieces of equipment they applied for. At the time of printing, handover events are scheduled at a number of brigade stations and all equipment will be with brigades by the end of March. You will find photos of these events on the RFS Volunteer Portal, or the July edition of the Bulletin.

Promotional tools

Two products are being developed to help you promote your event - a flyer, and a postcard. When you register to take part you will automatically receive a bundle of each.

Rural Fire Service Open Day
1 June 2013

Has your brigade registered to participate in RFS Day yet? In each Secretary’s edition of the Bulletin is a nomination and order form. Complete and return this order form to your Area Office as soon as possible to ensure you get the brochures and other promotional material you need for the day.

www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au

Rural Fire Bulletin

March 2013
An update to the RFS Volunteer Portal was launched in 2009, and since launch day we have been listening to your feedback about what we can do to improve it.

The updated RFS Volunteer Portal has been built from the ground up – the pages have been reorganised into a more logical layout, and new sections have been added.

New look

One of the major changes you’ll notice is a new design. We have worked to make the page cleaner, so you can find the information you need easier.

Only a small extract of a Latest News or Announcement is shown on the home page, so you can quickly see all of the latest information and then read more about the updates you’re interested in on a different page.

Information re-organised

We have looked at all of the information and moved it under more logical headings.

New feature: Have your details changed?

We understand that people move residence and will need to update their details at some point. You will now be able to do this quickly and easily through the Volunteer Portal. When you fill out the “My Details” form, an email is automatically sent to your Area Office notifying them of the change.
Feedback wanted!

We want to hear from you about the Volunteer Portal. Is something missing? What can we do better? Click the ‘Feedback’ link on the current Volunteer Portal and let us know.

The new and improved RFS Volunteer Portal will be launched very soon! Check the Volunteer Portal for a launch date!

If you haven’t registered...

If you haven’t registered yet, simply click the “New User” button and follow the prompts. If you have registered before, this form won’t let you register again.

If you’ve forgotten your password...

If you’ve forgotten your password, try the self-service “Forgot Your Password?” feature on the Volunteer Portal login page. This will ask you a series of questions, and then once it has verified you it will allow you to change your password. If you have any difficulties with this, please call the Department of Community Safety’s (DCS) ICS Service Centre on (07) 3247 8555 (between 7:30am to 6:00pm, Monday to Friday).

If you’ve forgotten your username...

If you’ve forgotten your username, either call the DCS ICS Service Centre on (07) 3247 8555 (between 7:30am to 6:00pm, Monday to Friday), or email us at rural.operations@dcs.qld.gov.au (monitored 7:00am to 4:00pm, Monday to Friday).

Please note: the team who monitor this email address are unable to reset passwords. If you have forgotten your password, please follow the steps above.
Making the most of recruitment opportunities

Extreme weather events typically lead to an increase in people wanting to volunteer, and this Fire Season has been no different.

On November 2, 2012, we launched a simplified way for people to express their interest in becoming a volunteer on the Rural Fire Service website (www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au) – a *Volunteering Expression of Interest (EOI)* form. This form asks for the address and the type of role the person is interested in (e.g. firefighter, support member, or Volunteer Community Educator) so that the enquiry can be quickly and easily directed to the most appropriate Brigade. Before this form, enquiries came through a generic contact form and delays were experienced due to the interested person not knowing what kind of details we needed to process their enquiry.

In the two months since this new, specific form was launched we have received 556* expressions of interest (*2/11/12 – 28/1/13). These EOIs are filtered and distributed on to Area Offices who then either contact the person, or send the EOI directly to the closest brigade.

When it comes to handling EOIs which may have been influenced by extreme weather events, it is important to make contact with the person as soon as possible, while their interest is still fresh. However, if you aren’t able to contact them for a few days due to operational activities they will understand. Remember that the application process takes time, and the new recruit cannot participate in Brigade activities until all aspects have been completed.

Make sure you are upfront about Brigade specific policies you may have, such as probation periods, or training that must be commenced before the new recruit can attend an incident. While these may disappoint the potential recruit, being upfront about what volunteering with your brigade means could mean you retain that volunteer for longer.

Keep them engaged and interested while they wait to be cleared by asking them to watch the Rural Fire Service Awareness DVD.

A new Recruitment Brochure has been developed which has added the *Volunteering EOI* form to a fourth, tear-off panel. These are ideal for use at events – the interested person can quickly fill out the form and return it to you. You then have the opportunity to chat to them at a later time, and prepare the application forms for them.

These brochures are available to order from your Area Office and are in bundles of 50.

Christine Osborne
Acting Manager, Volunteer Recruitment & Marketing
Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, Rural Operations
“Mud on the Tyres”

The Rural Operations Volunteer Training team is currently enhancing the practical operational aspects of training for volunteers, which has been supported through feedback received during state-wide consultation.

An Operations Focused Practical Training philosophy, which we have called “Mud on the Tyres”, has a purpose of enabling volunteers to spend more of their training time learning practical skills for active roles as firefighters rather than a heavy theory based training program.

The ultimate objective is to achieve practical, hands-on skills based opportunities that can be undertaken predominately at your rural fire brigade for the entry level “Firefighter Minimum Skills” program, and a greater use of practical training in the “Firefighter Advanced Skills” and “Crew Leader Skills” programs. Practical applications in the “First Officer” program will also be improved.

We all know that firefighting is a practical activity and it is necessary to have that reflected in our training programs. We have been informally doing the bulk of the practical components of our programs, however as part of the continuous improvement of our training systems we have identified the opportunity to provide a better structure for practical training and to use that as a means to reduce the paper based theory training in our programs where possible.

Some key training needs being developed for the initial “Mud on the Tyres” training is the inclusion of Chainsaw and Driver Training skills. These programs have been identified as a required proficiency in many Rural Fire Brigades and a standardised approach to the development of skills in these areas is being supported.

It is important to note that the introduction of “Mud on the Tyres” training will not mean that brigade members will be required to undergo training that is not relevant to their role - quite the opposite - as Operations Focused Practical Training is a part of the suite of programs being introduced to enhance the flexibility of the Volunteer Learning and Development Framework. This will ensure that we are moving away from a one size fits all approach and can provide relevant training to suit you and your Brigade’s needs.

Keep watching the Volunteer Portal for more information on Operations Focused Practical Training and the “Mud on the Tyres” programs as they are introduced.

Clinton Neumann TIFire
Acting Inspector
Rural Research & Training
Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, Rural Operations
On December 28, 1978, a United Airlines plane was making its final approach to Portland International Airport in the USA after a typically uneventful flight, with 181 passengers and 11 crew members on board.

The experienced pilot noticed that the light indicator to confirm that the landing gear was properly deployed had failed to illuminate green. The pilot notified air traffic control and requested additional time to resolve the situation. He went through the normal checklists while circling around, but in spite of his efforts the light indicator remained red.

Throughout the troubleshooting, the plane’s first officer and the flight engineer informed the pilot that the plane was getting low on fuel. The pilot either ignored these warnings or he did not comprehend the messages. Approximately nine kilometres from the airport the plane, now out of fuel, crashed with the loss of ten lives and with many more people seriously injured.

The post-crash analysis determined that the green light indicator for the nose landing gear had a burned-out bulb. The nose gear had been down and locked the entire time. Although the plane was fully functional and mechanically sound, it crashed because the person flying the plane became over-engrossed in what turned out to be a burned-out bulb. The pilot was so absorbed in the issue of the bulb that he forgot to fly the plane.

Again in the USA, the Hackensack Fire Department in New Jersey responded to a fire in the service bay area of the local Ford dealership in July 1988. Arriving appliances found a well developed fire and crews set to work to extinguish the flames. After a period of time, internal firefighting operations were not successful and crews were ordered to retreat from inside the building. Radio and personal communications were poor and before they could all get out, the building collapsed with the loss of three firefighter’s lives. Two other firefighters became trapped in a concrete block room which was used to secure mechanics’ tools.

Numerous radio transmissions were made by the trapped firefighters to the Incident Controller to advise where they were located. The Incident Controller acknowledged one of the transmissions but was unsure who was calling and what information they were providing. Repeated calls from the two trapped firefighters went unanswered. After 27 calls for help, their radio battery went flat and the two trapped firefighters ran out of air and suffocated.

At the subsequent investigation into the fire, it was revealed that a number of civilians with scanners had heard the calls for help from the trapped firefighters. Video footage also emerged of the incident and it shows the Incident Controller with his portable radio over his shoulder, actively participating in the firefighting operations.

Whereas the outcomes of both these incidents have been simplified for the purpose of this article, post incident analysis of these events highlighted that the failures that contributed to loss of life were a lack of communication skills under stress, a lack of situational awareness, poor team building development, poor decision making, and improper task allocation.

No-one intentionally set out to commit these errors. The pilot and the Incident Controller were both experienced people who undertook their roles with a high level of professionalism. However they both failed to comprehend the seriousness of the situation they faced in these circumstances and they did not, for whatever reasons, act appropriately on information that was provided.

Both these incidents occurred some years ago and have been used here to highlight that lessons learned have caused changes to be made to the way in which people accomplish their tasks and meet objectives. Operationally, Incident Management Systems and the Operations Doctrine provide us with guiding principles to help us achieve positive outcomes. Not all situations involve life-or-death scenarios, but these same principles apply in our regular day-to-day activities and provide us with a method to ensure that we can operate safely and minimise the impact of our actions on others – in everything we do.
Studies of human behaviour patterns suggest that the most well intentioned, best-trained, consistently performing individuals and work groups can, at times, make mistakes. To give us the best opportunity to minimise, or even eliminate errors, we should heed the learnings from these, and other, incidents.

To develop “foresight of hindsight” thinking, consider the lessons learned from the plane crash and fire incident. These lessons can assist us in developing our ability to remain safe and be successful.

1. Communication

This is the key to success in any endeavour. We have all experienced communication misunderstandings that have led to errors and omissions. We can reduce the potential for errors by speaking directly and respectfully, and communicating responsibly and regularly.

The use of mobile and portable radios is also critical for fireground safety and effective communications – but only if we have them, they work, and we know how to use them.

2. Situational awareness

This is a term to describe the need to maintain attentiveness to an event. It is having the ability to identify, to process, and to comprehend the critical elements of information about what is happening now, and using that to determine what will happen later. When we lose situational awareness we increase the potential for human error to occur with the subsequent undesirable outcomes.

3. Teamwork

Any group that does not perform as a team will eventually fail. Continual training, learning, and performing with members of the team reinforces the value of teamwork. Doing so in a mutually respectful manner heightens the chances of success. Individualism in a team is encouraged however, through understanding the team’s overall objective and applying your skills to your role within the team.

4. Decision making

This is based on information. Decisions made on a fireground rely on a risk/benefit analysis – how great is the risk for the desired outcome? With too little information we cannot develop a good risk assessment and this will contribute to errors. Too much information overloads our thought processes, and can also lead to errors occurring. Good decisions are made through analysing all information available and prioritising the information of importance. Decisions are made by everyone on a fireground. Understanding the “Commissioner’s Intent” or “Commander’s Intent” supports personnel to act appropriately to achieve desired outcomes in support of the overall mission.

5. Allocation of tasks

Be self confident to undertake the roles required to bring any operational situation to a successful conclusion, but also appreciate your limitations and those of others in the team. Safety is assured if we undertake our tasks to the best of our ability, we keep a lookout for our mates, and we undertake opportunities to develop ourselves through our experiences and our training.

To improve your ability to develop a foresight of hindsight, further information on these topics will be made available through “Vols Online” on the Volunteer Portal, or through your Rural Area Office, or you can contact the Rural Volunteer Training team on 3635 2742.

Craig Smith GFIrE
Superintendent
Executive Manager, Rural Training & Development
Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, Rural Operations
One of the hazards experienced with firefighting all over the world is Candlemoth Syndrome. This is a serious condition that can cause substantial problems through poor fireground performance and, more seriously, could cause injury or worse to firefighters.

Candlemoth Syndrome is so named because of similarities with a moth that is attracted to the flame of a candle without having any consideration for anything else happening around it, and it often gets too close to the flame with dire consequences. Similarly, some firefighters only focus on the flames in a fire and often disregard proper firefighting tactics and firefighter safety, and they lose their situational awareness.

Unfortunately, Candlemoth Syndrome is all too common but it can be treated if sufferers recognize the symptoms early enough and take preventative action to ensure they have no reoccurrence of this ailment.

Arriving at a fire and immediately putting water on the flames to extinguish the fire is not a poor strategy in itself, but is only successful and safe if you know what is burning, why it is burning, whether you are able to extinguish the flames without them spreading, and what the consequences are of applying this strategy. Many times this is a satisfactory direction to safely and effectively bring the incident to a successful conclusion, but sometimes we can get caught out because other more important issues need our consideration and action.

To assist firefighters to overcome Candlemoth Syndrome, it is important to understand that although initial fireground actions are determined through an Incident Controller’s “size-up” of the situation, all personnel on the fireground must know the incident objective and continually be aware of the situation so that necessary action can be taken to achieve the objective.
Having an awareness of the situation is not only about being aware of what is currently happening around you, it is also about predicting what is likely to happen in the future. With Candlemoth Syndrome, not only are we not aware of what is happening now, we are also not aware of what is about to happen. Being aware that something bad could potentially happen should alert us to take appropriate action to change that potential negative outcome into a positive one.

To treat Candlemoth Syndrome, we must continually practice being situationally aware. You may find the following actions helpful:

- **Communications** – listening, talking, and mutual understanding. Once, people used to communicate with drums and smoke signals. We now have radios, computers, and satellites, yet we still have trouble communicating. We all need to actively seek improvements in this area. And don’t forget, non-verbal communication can be very powerful.

- **Be alert** – to what is not obvious. Always be on the lookout for the unexpected. Cast your mind back to an experience where something happened that you did not expect, and think through the situation. This will stimulate your mind to seek alternative options if unfamiliar situations occur again, but provide you with knowledge if the same thing does happen again.

- **Debriefs** – every incident is an opportunity to learn something. Debrief within your brigade and turn learnings into training opportunities. It will make you better prepared and more aware of issues that could occur at the next incident. Learn from things that went wrong and practice them at training, but also continually practice the things that went right.

- **Training** – practice makes perfect. Find out how things work before you need to use them. Find out who has certain skills and who can undertake particular tasks when needed. Train as you play so you will be “battle ready” on the day. And share training opportunities with your neighbouring brigades.

- **Be active** – for active firefighters, actively engage in practical tasks when you’re training. Actively seek information from others in similar roles. Be confident in your ability, but know where you can get support. Try new things in a controlled training environment.

- **Have courage** – do not be afraid to ask questions if there is something you want to know, and do not be afraid to respectfully point things out to others who may need to know. Likewise, do not be judgemental and do not jump to conclusions. None of us are born with knowledge – we acquire it by wanting to learn and having the courage to have a go.

- **Have an Attitude of Safety** – safety is paramount. Always be on the lookout for yourself and others to reduce the potential for harm. Do not take unnecessary risks. Consider the consequences of your actions, and balance the risk against the outcome – is it worth it? Consider how your life, or those of your loved ones, would change if you were injured.

Will you now do anything differently to ensure you will not be affected by Candlemoth Syndrome?

Craig Smith GiFireE  
Superintendent  
Executive Manager, Rural Training & Development  
Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, Rural Operations

Similarly, some firefighters only focus on the flames in a fire and often disregard proper firefighting tactics and firefighter safety, and they lose their situational awareness.
Basic Incident Management at small wildfires

Incident Management on a fireground uses the same principles that are applied in any workplace, sports team, or organisation – to be successful, one person is responsible for the overall outcome through the support and effort undertaken by the people within that group.

If the number of people in that group, or the amount of work that needs to be done, becomes too large for one person to manage effectively, that person should share the workload with others - but still only one person holds the overall responsibility for the group’s outcomes. To ensure success, a structured and co-ordinated approach is necessary to enable all groups to achieve positive outcomes.

In an emergency incident, the person who is responsible for the outcomes is the Incident Controller. Every incident must have one Incident Controller, regardless of the size of the incident, the resources applied to the incident, or the complexity of the incident. The Incident Controller is responsible for all fireground functions, and the guiding principles they use prepares them for incident escalation and promotes effective operations. The guiding principles are contained within the Incident Management System.

The reason why there is only one Incident Controller is to ensure that a single plan can be implemented without multiple or conflicting plans and actions being taken. The Incident Controller has an overall view of the incident and if everyone has their own plan and everyone does their own thing, there is only one outcome – CHAOS!

The Incident Controller will rely heavily upon information being provided by those working on the fireground and those with local knowledge. Although the Incident Controller generally has a good overall view of the operation, understanding the “Commander’s Intent” will enable strategic and tactical decisions to be made on the fireground to assist with the effective resolution of the whole operation. The philosophy of “Commander’s Intent” is for everyone to understand the purpose of the operation – the mission – which provides for those working on the fireground to take action to achieve the mission without having to be provided with explicate orders to achieve outcomes. That is, by knowing the incident plan, all personnel can take action through their own knowledge and skills to contribute to bringing the plan to a successful conclusion.

Having the responsibility of being the Incident Controller is not about being the person to blame if something goes wrong, it is about being the person who has an overview of the whole operation and can therefore make the best decisions regarding the desired outcome of the operation. The Incident Controller should use as many sources and people to obtain as much information as necessary to enhance the quality of their decisions, and every Incident Controller who does their best and undertakes their tasks in good faith is protected.

Incident Management is about making decisions to achieve the incident mission, or objective. It is not about filling in paperwork or developing complex functional structures. Similarly, incident management does not physically put the fire out, but it does make sure that everyone on the fireground understands the mission and understands the plan that is implemented to ensure the incident is resolved and personnel are safe.

As the number of people working at an incident increases, and the amount of work escalates, the Incident Controller should delegate functions to other people to share the workload, but the Incident Controller still manages the overall incident. The sharing of this workload may involve appointing, for example, an Operations Officer, or a Planning Officer, or even Administration support personnel, but the purpose is to ensure that the workload is shared without overburdening one person. Teamwork is paramount.

If the incident escalates to a more complex situation, the Incident Management System and our Operations Doctrine provide guiding principles to assist with the management of the operation. When the incident escalates, the establishing of more personnel within the management structure and the recording of actions becomes a necessity to assist with the complexities that come with the growing incident.

At small wildfire incidents, where perhaps only a few rural fire brigades are in attendance, the role of the Incident Controller is still to manage the resources working at the incident, ensure the safety of all personnel working on the incident, and to implement a plan of action to resolve the incident. However this can usually be done by one person who may also be actively involved in the operations due to the very small size and complexity of the incident, but who must still develop and communicate a plan to others who are working on the fireground.

If you perform the role of Incident Controller, you need to communicate this to everyone on the fireground and also to your Regional Firecom Centre. At the first most practical opportunity, the Incident Controller should step back from the actual firefighting operation and relocate to a more suitable position to continue to undertake the functions of managing the incident. By being in a visible position external to the actual firefighting, and wearing the tabard, arriving personnel will be able to readily locate the Incident Controller and be given direction on the plan of action being taken. Knowing that every incident must
have only one Incident Controller, these actions will remove confusion of arriving crews as to who is in charge and will prevent someone else from taking on this role if they know it has already been established.

Similar to how other groups work, the “game plan” is communicated to everyone so that each individual knows what they have to do and can apply their skills in order to contribute to achieving the overall objective, and also so everyone knows who is making the overall decisions. The plan that is developed by the Incident Controller can be a mental plan of action and could be communicated by simply just telling people what the objective is, but the Incident Controller should utilise whatever resources they need to ensure that the communication is effective and understood. Because the Incident Controller has access to a number of sources of information and has an overview of the whole incident, they may be aware of situations on the fireground that others may not see. It is important, then, that everyone on the fireground respects that the Incident Controller is making decisions based on information they have gathered for the benefit of all. Although the plan of action may be mentally developed, consideration should be given to making notes of the incident as these will assist with lessons learned opportunities at a later date.

Regardless of the size of the incident, be in the habit of regularly applying the principles of RECEO and PACT to develop an action plan and to assist decision making. The acronym RECEO refers to Rescue, Exposures, Containment, Extinguishment, and Overhaul, in that order. If operational priorities are based on these guiding principles then successful outcomes are likely. The acronym PACT is a decision making guide to support RECEO through considering all issues impacting on the operation, and prioritising the needs, identifying alternative ways of addressing the needs, choosing the most appropriate alternative to address the issue, and taking appropriate action. We sometimes believe that applying these types of principles to small incidents is not necessary, but it is good habit to get into and you never know when something unusual may occur.

People with local knowledge have an important role to play in providing information to assist with decision making, and they can make excellent Incident Controllers in a local area. To achieve the operational objective, effective decision making incorporating local knowledge will ensure successful outcomes.

In summary, when undertaking the role of Incident Controller, tell everyone you are the Incident Controller, including Firecom, apply the principles of Incident Management, and ask yourself these questions:
- What have I got - am I aware of my situation and the incident’s situation?
- What is going to happen - when I develop a plan of action what do I need the outcome to be?

- Do I have the resources to achieve the outcome?
- Should I call for additional resources?
- Does everyone know what the incident objective is?
- Is everyone safe and can they be kept safe?

Remember, there is no right or wrong with Incident Management. The application of the principles of the Incident Management System, your knowledge and experience, and your attitude will enable you to achieve quality outcomes. Be confident and have a go, but know when and where to get help. By undertaking appropriate actions to answer the above questions, you will be able to undertake the role of Incident Controller and achieve quality outcomes at those small localised wildfires — and you will be prepared if the incident escalates. Be confident in your ability, but choose to handover the role to someone else if you desire, or you should consider having a “buddy” to assist you with the role. The “buddy” would be ideal in a Safety Officer capacity.

If you are not the Incident Controller and someone else has that role, you make the Incident Controller’s work much easier if you:
- Be responsible for your own safety.
- Provide what information you can, but appreciate that someone must be in charge.
- Advise the Incident Controller if you believe a decision puts you or others at personal risk.
- Assist with developing alternative options for effective decision making.
- Understand the incident objective, and take appropriate action to achieve that aim.
- Communicate well and communicate often.
- Enjoy the experience of being a valuable member of a successful team.

A pocket guide is a simple but effective reference for those who undertake the function of Incident Controller at small, non-complex incidents. It will not apply to all situations and all of it may not apply in your brigade. But it does give basic assistance to anyone who takes on the role and provides some guidance to assist with Incident Management at small incidents.

This pocket guide can be obtained from Rural Training through your Area Office.

Craig Smith GIFireE
Superintendent
Executive Manager, Rural Training & Development
Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, Rural Operations

www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au

Rural Fire Bulletin  March 2013  15
The Rural Operations Volunteer Training team is currently developing a range of resources to support Brigade level trainers in the development of volunteer firefighters. This includes a greater involvement in the delivery and assessment of Firefighter Minimum Skills (FMS) training, a toolkit for brigade trainers to have access to pre-planned training sessions for use on brigade training sessions, and a professional development program for volunteer trainers.

These opportunities are not additional requirements for volunteers to undertake, they are merely to assist those volunteers who want to do training in their own brigade, at a time that suits them, and through their own personnel delivering the information. This should make training more accessible, more enjoyable, and more rewarding for those who choose to use this option.

Firefighter Minimum Skills

The recent improvements to Firefighter Minimum Skills (FMS) delivery and assessment materials have paved the way for enhanced involvement at the brigade level during the training process for this program. The materials have been streamlined to reduce repetition and better fit the actual role volunteer firefighters undertake in a Rural Fire Brigade.

By simplifying and streamlining the training and assessment resources, and establishing a better process for the recognition of on-the-job learning, and integrating that into the FMS process, more training can be conducted in the Brigade with a reduced necessity for brigade members to attend specific training days, if that is more suitable to meet volunteer needs. This method will provide an option for volunteers and Brigades to train when, where, and how it best suits their needs.

The professional development program for brigade trainers will allow an even greater input into localised training and assessment processes at the brigade level for FMS and other programs within the Volunteer Learning and Development Framework.

Brigade Trainer Toolkit

The role of Brigade Trainer, particularly in those busier brigades, can at times be a demanding and stressful undertaking. There are often enthusiastic volunteers looking to Brigade Trainers to regularly provide engaging and informative skills development sessions. For those Brigades that meet for training on a regular schedule, such as weekly or fortnightly, it is often a difficult task to come up with a range of training activities that keeps Brigade members engaged and informed.

The concept of the Brigade Trainer Toolkit is to provide a number of different training ideas and scenarios to assist with keeping Brigade members enthused and remove the burden on Brigade Trainers to continually look for new activities for each brigade training session.

Activities are grouped into the following categories:

- Incident Control
- Practical Firefighting
- Rescue & Hazardous Materials
- Team Building
- General Information

These activities are designed to provide a supplementary suite of tools to support existing training programs and provide for competency maintenance opportunities. The Brigade Trainer Toolkit is an ongoing project which will continue to develop to support Brigade level training, and will serve to enhance recognition packages that support experienced volunteers wishing to have their knowledge formalised, or for volunteers who have moved from interstate to have their qualifications recognised.

Volunteer Trainer Development Program

The Volunteer Trainer Development Program is a professional development program to formally recognise and enhance the skills of volunteer trainers in Rural Fire Brigades and develop better capacity for Brigades to provide “in-house” training to their members.

This program empowers local volunteers who wish to have a greater control on the direction of their training to access more training opportunities that meets their local needs, and to undertake that training through the support and direction of their own Brigade Trainer. This will also assist volunteers at the brigade level to be recognised for their existing skills without the need to undertake additional training where skills already exist.

Brigade Trainers who choose to up skill their Trainer competencies will be provided with advice and support on being able to formally recognise existing skills, and can provide options to Brigade members to formalise existing knowledge. The skills and knowledge gained through this program will also benefit volunteers with career opportunities that involve workplace training and assessment, as they will be eligible for nationally recognised qualifications as a workplace trainer.

The implementation of any of the “Volunteers Training Volunteers” components will only be undertaken at the request of each Brigade and each Brigade Trainer. Further information can be obtained from the Rural Volunteer Training team on 3635 2742.

Clinton Neumann TFireE
Acting Inspector
Rural Research & Training
Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, Rural Operations
Receiving Donations

Rural Fire Brigades who conduct a hazard mitigation burn or a stack burn for a business (e.g., on land that produces income for the owner/occupier) will need to issue a tax invoice for their service. To legally issue a tax invoice a Brigade must be registered for GST. The client pays the invoice and can use their receipt to make a claim on their tax return as a cost to their business.

If the Brigade is not registered for GST, the Brigade can issue a non-tax invoice (not including GST). The client pays the invoice and can use their receipt to make a claim on their tax return as a cost to their business.

If a Brigade conducts a burn for a private land owner/occupier (e.g., their property does not provide an income) and receives a donation, that donation is not tax deductible for the land owner. The Australian Tax Office (ATO) views this as a donation (fee) for receiving a particular benefit. However, the Brigade may issue a receipt to acknowledge the donation.

Any private citizen or organisation can give a donation to a Rural Fire Brigade. That donation is tax deductible for the donor, irrespective of whether the Brigade is registered for GST or not, as long as the donation is not directly linked to a service being supplied.

Under the new Australian taxation legislation, a Rural Fire Brigade may only solicit or receive tax deductible donations if they have:

- established and have ATO endorsement for public fund for their Brigade; or
- agreed to participate in the Queensland Volunteer Rural Fire Brigades Donations Fund and have received receipt and deposit books for this trust managed, public fund.

Brigades who have not adopted one of these two options are unable legally, to solicit or receive tax deductible donations.

Peter Varley
Acting Chief Superintendent
Director Rural Operations
Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, Rural Operations

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:

- **A3.9 – Deployment** - Name change from Participation in Inter-State and Intra-State Task Forces. Requirement for CHC’s and medical assessments pre-deployment both within Queensland and inter-state removed, reducing red tape and streamlining the deployment process.

MINOR BRIGADE MANUAL CHANGES

The Business Rules listed below have been uploaded on to the Volunteer Portal:

- **D7.1 – Rural Fire Bulletin** – Updated with details on how the Rural Fire Bulletin is compiled and how/when to submit articles for consideration/inclusion
- **D5.3 – Brigade Equipment** – Updates to Appendix B (Brigade Requisitions Completion Procedures),

The following documents have been uploaded to the Volunteer Portal:

**Standing Orders:**
- SO-Q-PD-3.3 – SIOPP Quarterly Release 1112 (New)

**Safety Bulletins:**
- SB-01-13 – 2013 Flood Recovery Operations (New)
The FAQ sheet was posted to Fire Warden and Deputy Fire Warden in early January; however, these questions and answers may also assist your brigade.

We received some feedback after the mail out on one of the definitions, “Fire Permit Restriction Period”, and so a revised definition has been included in this Bulletin. An updated FAQ sheet can be downloaded from the Volunteer Portal.

The essence of this revision relates to the line, “However, permits already issued cannot be revoked under these conditions.” This line has been deleted and replaced as follows:

“Fire permits are not automatically revoked during this period. Fire Wardens are encouraged to discuss the implications of a local Fire Permit Restriction Period with their respective Chief Fire Warden prior to implementation.

Note: Fire Wardens can revoke permits at any time of the year if they have a valid reason.”

The FAQ sheet is available to download from the RFS Volunteer Portal (https://volunteers.emergency.qld.gov.au), and the RFS website (www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au).

Should you have any further questions, please contact your Area Office.

Frequently Asked Questions

FIRE WARDEN

Myth
That all ‘Permit to Light Fire’ applicants must provide their adjoining neighbours with a minimum of 72 hours notification in relation to their intention to apply for a permit.

Fact
Not all applicants for a ‘Permit to Light Fire’ are required to provide their adjoining neighbours with a minimum of 72 hours notification. Fire Wardens have the discretionary authority to determine what is required as a reasonable amount of notice time based on local knowledge and experience.

Explanation
While 72 hours notification (or greater) may be seen as a reasonable amount of time in populated areas, the Queensland Rural Fire and Rescue Service (QRFS) acknowledges that this timeframe may not be appropriate in rural primary production areas. Fire Wardens have the authority to assess the needs of both the applicant and adjoining neighbours when determining the appropriate notification timeframe for each individual application. Fire Wardens are encouraged to discuss any local anomalies and issues with their respective Chief Fire Warden (Area Director Rural Operations) in relation to this topic. While 72 hours notification may be written as a standard in some QRFS produced materials, Fire Wardens have the authority to exercise discretion in relation to a reasonable time of notification.

Myth
That the Fire Danger Period, when invoked, is a state wide fire ban and no fires are allowed.

Fact
The Fire Danger Period, when invoked, restricts the use of fire to permit holders only (with a few exemptions). This appealed to the needs of both the permit holder and is not to be continued with a fire ban.

Explanation
The Fire Danger Period is not a predetermined annual event and implementation is at the discretion of the authority of the Commissioner. The main change to normal business during a Fire Danger Period is the requirement of a permit for fires under the use of 3m x 3m x 3m.

Myth
That all ‘Permit to Light Fire’ applications must be received by the Fire Warden in writing.

Fact
Applications for a ‘Permit to Light Fire’ can be received either verbally or in writing. Fire Wardens have the discretionary authority to determine the method in which a permit application is received.

Explanation
While written applications are performed, the QRFS acknowledges that local conditions may dictate an alternative method. Fire Wardens are therefore afforded the authority to accept verbal applications when circumstances such as time, distance, and applicant experience, are taken into account.

Myth
Fire Wardens have the authority to appoint a Deputy Fire Warden for their respective district who is then able to operate in conjunction with the Fire Warden.

Fact
Deputy Fire Wardens must be appointed by the Chief Fire Warden and can only operate in the absence of the Fire Warden.

Explanation
While written applications are performed, the QRFS acknowledges that local conditions may dictate an alternative method. Fire Wardens are therefore afforded the authority to appoint a Deputy Fire Warden for their respective district who is then able to operate in conjunction with the Fire Warden.

Myth
That all Fire Bans are instigated from Senior QRFS staff located in Brisbane.

Fact
Fire Bans are predominantly localised and are enforced by the Chief Fire Warden.

Explanation
Before enforcing a local fire ban, consultation will occur with the Regional Manager Rural Operations and other local stakeholders (which may include Fire Wardens). State wide fire bans are rare and can only be instigated by the Commissioner.

GLOSSARY

Fire Permit Restriction Period
Is implemented locally by the Fire Warden during times of increased fire danger. Discretionary authority is used to restrict and/or cease the issuing of fire permits until the period of perceived risk has terminated. Fire permits are not automatically revoked during this period. Fire Wardens are encouraged to discuss the implications of a local Fire Permit Restriction Period with their respective Chief Fire Warden prior to implementation.

Note: Fire Wardens can revoke permits at any time of the year if they have a valid reason.

Fire Ban
Is implemented state wide by the Commissioner to focus attention and resources towards a common threat, including bushfire and seasonal severe weather events.

Fire Danger Period
Is implemented state wide by the Commissioner for a designated timeframe, and when enforced restricts the use of fire to permit holders only (with a few exemptions).

Operational Period
Is implemented state wide by the Commissioner to focus attention and resources towards a common threat, including bushfire and seasonal severe weather events.

Fire Permits
Are issued to permit holders when needed, in consultation with local Fire Wardens and other stakeholders. All permits are revoked during a fire ban. A state wide Fire Ban is only ever used and can only be instigated by the Commissioner. These have been in operation state wide during bushfire seasons.

Save the date!

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK 2013

National Volunteer Week 2013 will be celebrated May 13 - 19.
National Volunteer Week 2013 theme will officially be announced in March 2013.
The Evolution of Community Warnings

The strategic intent of community warnings in its most simplistic term is to deliver accurate and timely emergency information to a target community. The responsibility for the dissemination of the information is a joint initiative between the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) and the Department’s Media and Corporate Communications team (MACC).

There are a number of ways we can deliver warnings, however the most time efficient method to engage with a large community is generally through outlets such as radio, social media sites, internet, and T.V. The use of local arrangements (such as door knocking & community meetings) is also a very effective method when time and resources allow.

Recently during Operation Yaamba, several of our regions used Volunteer Community Educators (VCE’s) to perform this task with a great deal success.

There are 3 main levels of messaging:

**Advice**
- No immediate threat to property, however keep people informed and up-to-date with developments.

**Watch and Act**
- Identified as supporting the need for people to be aware of their situation, the circumstances around them, and take action to be prepared and protect themselves, their family, and neighbours.

**Emergency Warning**
- Associated with the highest level of risk to life, and aligned with the principle message that the safest option is to not be near the fire or other emergency.

Another lower level of messaging is termed ‘Advisory’ which provides information regarding basic fire operations in a general area.

Note: community warnings can also be supported through activation of the national ‘Emergency Alert’ system (text and voice messages to mobile and landline phones), however QFRS has not undertaken this measure for bushfire as yet.

The evolutionary advancement of “Community Warnings” is becoming a normal part of operational business as dictated by a society with an ever increasing appetite for information. There is also no doubt that an effectively warned community is a safer and more resilient community, particularly when afforded the opportunity to make timely and informed decisions.

As operational firefighters responding to emergency incidents, it has always been important to ‘put out the fire’, however it is now becoming just as important to simultaneously ‘put out the information’.

For more information, Community Warnings is documented within Operations Doctrine, Incident Directive 21.2, which you can download from the Volunteer Portal.

Gary McCormack
Inspector
Manager Bushfire Safety
Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, Rural Operations
Outcome of the Appliance Fleet Colours Survey

In the November edition of the Bulletin we invited you to have your say on appliance fleet colours. We published the cost of painting the cabins in Spectrum Yellow, and also the cost savings that could be made by using yellow livery on a white cabin.

Your feedback and recommendations were tabled at the Operations Strategic Working Group, which is composed of Rural Fire Service volunteers, Rural Fire Brigades Association of Queensland representatives, and Rural Operations staff.

As a result, the 2012-2013 appliance build program will introduce a new livery design. The medium appliance cabins will retain the yellow paint colour below the window line, and the upper section of the cabin will be white.

The design varies slightly from the illustration included in the November issue of the Bulletin, and reflects the view of the Operations Strategic Working Group to retain more of the yellow colour in the lower part of the cabin.

Rob Walker
Inspector, Manager Operational Support
Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, Rural Operations

Grants available for up to $150,000

Grants are an excellent way for brigades to receive funding to help begin or complete projects that they otherwise would not have been able to.

The Jupiters Casino Benefit Fund (JCBF) and Gambling Community Benefit Fund (GCBF) are two such grant programs that you can apply for funding through the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation.

Standard applications for JCBF grants are limited to a maximum of $150,000 and are for capital expenditure/fixed assets such as the improvement of facilities, for example the building of sheds or toilet facilities.

GCBF grants are for expenditure for items up to $35,000 such as the purchase of new or secondhand equipment, community events, research projects, fundraising initiatives, volunteer support, etc.

Further details about both types of grant can be obtained via their website at www.olgr.qld.gov.au.

Once you have decided to make an application to the Gaming Funds it is essential that you gain approval from your Area Director before proceeding.

To make an application, just follow these simple steps:
1. Download the application form from their website (www.olgr.qld.gov.au).
2. Complete the required information that relates to your brigade (you can leave blank the details of the application where the sponsor’s information is required).
3. Gather letters from local referees as well as quotations for the goods and/or services required to submit with your application.
4. Where information is requested about the financial position of the brigade you can insert ‘zeros’.
5. Once you have completed the ‘loadable’ file and attached quotations and letters from referees, send the file to your local Area Office to gain approval from the Area Director and Regional Manager.
6. The file can then be sent into Central Office to be reviewed and loaded directly onto the Gaming site on your behalf.

To ensure that you meet the application cut off dates please ensure that you allow four weeks for the approval process and time to load the application onto the required site. The dates that each application round closes is available on www.olgr.qld.gov.au.

Once your application is approved you must provide updated quotations for a claim to be made to the Gaming Fund. The funds will then be transferred to you and must be acquitted with tax invoices once the work is completed.
2012-2013 Appliance Build Pumpset Upgrade

The 2012-2013 medium appliance build will feature a Hatz 2G40 ‘silent pack’ diesel engine, which produces 21Hp at 3600rpm and is close coupled to a GAAM 125 pump, which will pump 600 litres per minute at 1180kPa.

The Hatz 2G40 Silent Pack is an air cooled, 2-cylinder, four stroke diesel engine which is encapsulated in noise-proof insulation, which reduces the engine noise by 90% to 10% = 10 d BA.

Although reducing noise emissions, the output and constant load are not affected by the capsule, and the accessibility of maintenance and operating points remains unchanged.

The noise-protection capsule is equipped with cool-air ducting that regulates thermal conditions inside the capsule, so that the Silent Pack can be operated in all known climate zones.

Rob Walker
Inspector, Manager Operational Support
Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, Rural Operations

FIRE FIGHTING PUMPS DESIGNED FOR DEPENDABILITY

GAAM fire fighting pumps are designed and manufactured with ease of use and simplicity of maintenance in mind.

Our MK 70 is a rugged, powerful and high performance portable pump for utility fire fighting applications. Light in weight, this solution is ideal for mounting on a vehicle or trailer with a small tank. Pump available in both Petrol and Diesel.

For more information call 07 3269 9495 or visit www.gaam.com.au/mk70
The communities of Mount Nebo and Mount Glorious, within Brisbane Region, face high risk from bushfire as a result of difficult terrain, aspect, restricted access, and limited water supply.

Previously the Moreton Bay Regional Council (MBRC) identified a need to develop and implement a bushfire emergency response strategy to improve the safety of residents and visitors to these locations.

In consultation with residents of the area, Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS), Queensland Police Service (QPS), Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS), and staff from MBRC, an Emergency Warning System (EWS) was developed for the area.

The EWS is a three phase warning system consisting of:

- a siren with variable sounds; and
- LED roadside signs.

Additionally, information regarding the phases of activation and the use of the siren is available to residents by calling 1800 MT NEBO (1800 68 6326).

The EWS was initially introduced into the Mount Nebo area, but has now been extended to cover Mount Glorious with the construction of an additional tower outside the township. Additionally the Mount Nebo tower was recently relocated to allow for the construction of the new Mount Nebo Rural Fire Brigade (RFB) station.

With the changes to the system, it was identified that the sirens should be perimeter tested to identify any areas in which it may be difficult to hear the siren when activated. Staff from MBRC and QPWS joined Rural Operations staff and volunteers for a day of testing. Participants were strategically located throughout the communities and the results of the testing recorded. The audibility of the siren and tone were recorded and the results collated. The results from the testing will assist in identifying areas in which an alternative method of notification (e.g. door knocking by Volunteer Community Educators) will need to be undertaken.

The LED roadside signs, which are capable of displaying numerous messages are strategically located on the major roadways leading to Mount Nebo and Mount Glorious. These signs provide additional information to motorists regarding fire activity or road closures due to traffic accidents.

The decision to activate is made in consultation with all relevant agencies and ultimately rests with QFRS for fire-related incidents and/or QPS for non fire-related events.

The QFRS and MBRC are responsible for ensuring residents of Mount Nebo and Mount Glorious maintain a high level of awareness concerning the risk of bushfire in the area, and are aware of, and able to respond to the EWS signals.

Mechanisms to improve awareness and understanding of the EWS include:

- Direct mail to all residents via annual post box distribution
- PREPARE.ACT.SURVIVE. community meetings (conducted annually)
- EWS information on display at key locations – eg. Post Office
- Other events undertaken by Mount Nebo RFB from time to time

Neil Kelso
Inspector
Area Director Caboolture
Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, Rural Operations
Want to update your skills?

Volunteers onLine is the online learning platform where you can work through your courses at your own pace, whenever and wherever you like!

The training programs currently available include Rural Fire Service Awareness, Crew Leader Program, First Officer Program as well as several general awareness courses such as Helitack, Swiftwater Awareness, PrepareActSurvive and Identification of Heat Related Illness.

To find out more, visit the Learning Centre page on the Volunteer Portal at www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au

Fire Bans

A number of factors are taken into consideration by Queensland Fire and Rescue Service before implementing a Fire Ban.

Whilst Fire Bans can be implemented in Queensland, fire and weather conditions can vary significantly in different parts of the State. To address the diversity of our State, Queensland uses a different system to other States, where 2400 Fire Wardens operate a Permit to Light Fire System in their local area to control the use of fire. These Fire Wardens are locals who know their area well, and know the conditions in that area. Throughout the year they can decide to revoke, suspend, or to not issue any new Permits to Light Fire, dependant on the conditions in their local area. The suspension or cancellation of Permits to Light Fire has occurred in some areas this fire season.

The fires that have been active in Queensland this fire season are predominantly started by lightning strikes (Western Queensland), by accident, or arson (in other areas). A Fire Ban does not prevent these kinds of fires.
Training on Field Trips with Saunders Beach RFB

As the iconic swirling thick black smoke and bright red orange flames of our cane field fires disappear slowly from our Queensland sunsets one could be forgiven in thinking that the dangers of a cane fire are almost gone.

However between 2004 and 2006 whilst in the Mackay Area, I responded to several incidents involving cane fires but none were directly a result of a cane burn gone wrong.

These fires included one death, two severe burn victims, loss of farm tractors, three cars destroyed, two power poles burnt, power lines down, other property fire damaged, and loss of standing sugar cane and thrash blankets.

At Saunders Beach we are always looking at various ways to introduce our crew members to different types of vegetation fires as part of their broader knowledge, and keep training fresh and interesting.

Therefore we decided to introduce our brigade volunteers to the dangers of sugar cane fires - standing crops and thrash.

As there are no immediate cane farms in the Townsville Area, arrangements were made with Lieutenant Phil Loizou from Home Hill Auxiliary Fire Station, who is also a cane farmer, to conduct a burn with the crew on a local farm in the Burdekin Area.

I was brought up on a cane farm south west of Mackay, so I was looking forward to the field trip to bring back the memories. Only one other brigade member had been to a cane fire, so it was going to be an eye opening experience for the rest of the team.
On Sunday 14 October, 2012, crew members from Saunders Beach experienced first-hand how dangerous a cane fire can be.

It was Saturday arvo, 10 September, 2011, when we all met at the farm. We discussed a little about the history of sugar cane and how sugar cane is a perennial tall grass that grows well in a domesticated form on a farm environment. Phil then went onto brief the crew on how the burn was to be conducted, noting the proper safety procedures.

To say that the crew was impressed after the burn was an understatement. They had never experienced anything like it before; even comparable to some of the wildfires they had been to.

So this year we again organised another field trip to a cane burn for our new recruits and a couple of our crew that missed last year due to prior commitments. This is planned for in the next couple of weeks.

On Sunday 14 October, 2012, crew members from Saunders Beach experienced first-hand how dangerous a cane fire can be in an uncontrolled situation - when a wildfire jumped a creek and floaters landed on deep thrash in a ratoon paddock and spread rapidly to standing cane with wild wind conditions.

At least two members of the crew had been there last year for the burn, but for the other two it was literally a baptism of fire.

There was little doubt that the lessons from our field trip last year, and the one later this year, will reinforce just how dangerous a cane fire can be in an uncontrolled situation even if the cane fire sunsets disappear altogether.

In 2013 we are planning a prescribed burn in an exotic pine plantation as part of our crew's ongoing training.

Ian Melody
First Officer, Saunders Beach Rural Fire Brigade
22 October 2012
Congratulations to Australia Day award recipients for 2013

Firefighters, support members, Fire Wardens, and Volunteer Community Educators were honoured this Australia Day, with 29 Rural Fire Service volunteers awarded the Australia Day Achievement medallion for their service to their brigades and their communities.

The volunteers listed here were recognised for their commitment, dedication, leadership, and contribution to their brigades and communities. Congratulations to you all, and thank you for the valuable service you provide.
Mr Kris Niotakis - Guanaba RFB
Miss Marie Edwards - Woodlea RFB
Mr Peter Garrett - Maroochy River RFB
Mr David Gower - Glass House Mountains RFB
Mr Robert Haigh - Mungar Yerra RFB
Mr Colin Howell - Woodhill RFB
Mr Brian Marfleet - Dayboro & District RFB
Miss Sarah Martin - Tamborine RFB
Mr Robert Maxwell - Bauple RFB
Mr Keith Nimmo - Orchid Beach RFB
Mr Ross Nimmo - Orchid Beach RFB
Mr Wayne Partridge - Ormeau RFB
Mr Mitchell Rogers - Wasp Creek RFB
Mr James Runham - Ripley Valley RFB
Mrs Janice Sinclair - Bonogin Valley RFB
Mr Michael Spartalis - North Millstream RFB
Mr Fabian Stangherlin - Greenbank RFB
Mr Tony Thompson - Mungar Yerra RFB
Mr Lewis Truloff - Ormeau RFB
Mr Jake Waterhouse - Hattonvale Summerholm RFB
Mr David Way - Burnett Heads RFB
Mrs Margaret Wood - Murphys Creek RFB
Mr Reginald Wood - Murphys Creek RFB
Mr Ronald Rowe - Purono RFB
Mrs Anna Marie Leeds - Cungulla RFB
Mr Paul Fitzgerald - Rollingstone RFB
Mr Michael Terkelsen - Horseshoe Bay RFB
Mr Michael Gofton - Seymour RFB
Mrs Katherine Ferguson - Millaroo Dalbeg RFB
Mr Gavin Fryar – Area Director Rural Operations, Charters Towers
Important Health, Safety, and Wellbeing Information for Volunteers

The health, safety, and wellbeing of all volunteers is an important focus of the Rural Fire Service (RFS). The RFS will do everything that is reasonably practicable to keep volunteers safe and healthy, and to also meet its legislative obligation. However, this requires the support and cooperation of all volunteers and staff.

In 2011, the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service released a Business Rule outlining the requirement for an operational firefighter, urban or rural, to disclose if they have a medical or health condition that may impact on their ability to safely perform their operational role. This business rule is D 3.2. Fitness for Duty – Notifiable Conditions, and can be sourced by asking your First Officer or Area Office. All volunteers should make themselves aware of this business rule, and also Rural Fire Brigade Manual Business Rule C 2.2 – Fitness for Duty and Fatigue Management.

Some examples of a Notifiable Condition that should be reported to the RFS include:
- Ischaemic heart disease, Angina
- Acute myocardial infarction
- Loss or significant diminishing of sight or hearing
- Asthma
- Diabetes (type 1 and 2)
- Epileptic seizures
- Stroke

You may also be required to take prescribed medication for a health or medical condition that may cause some impairment, and therefore potentially impact your safety and the safety of fellow volunteers. Your doctor and pharmacist will advise you if the prescribed drug does cause impairment and the precautions you should take. You should also advise your First Officer or Area Office if you intend to continue performing RFS operational duties while on the medication.

Some important Do's and Don'ts relating to prescription medication:
- Do look for and follow instructions on warning labels.
- Do ask your pharmacist or doctor to explain anything you do not understand.
- Do read the Consumer Medicines Information leaflet available for most prescription medications.
- Do advise your First Officer/Area Office.
- Don't engage in high risk activities like back burning and firefighting unless you are fit to do so.
- Don't drive or operate machinery or equipment unless you are fit to do so.
- Don't stop taking your prescribed medication if your ability to drive or your ability to perform your RFS role is affected. Instead, stop driving and attending incidents, and discuss possible alternative medicines with your doctor.
- Don't take more or less of the prescribed dose.
- Don't take another person’s medicine if you have forgotten your own.
- Don't drive if you have missed a dose of medicine that controls symptoms which affect your driving.

I can’t emphasise enough the need to let your First officer know if you have a medical condition, or are taking medication that may impact on your ability to operate safely. In an emergency situation this knowledge may be very important for the Queensland Ambulance Service and emergency room doctors.

Always remember:
To enable us to protect the community
we must first protect ourselves.

Cyrel Wright
Senior Workplace Health and Safety Officer
Queensland Fire and Rescue Service
In preparation for Operation Baker staff from the Caboolture Area Office in conjunction with the Caboolture Area Commander, held an information evening at the Caboolture Fire Station. The purpose of this event, which was attended by volunteers, auxiliary, and urban firefighters from the Northern Zone of Brisbane Region, was to expose rural volunteers to the various types of equipment which may be used during severe weather incidents, such as Swiftwater Rescue equipment.

Volunteers were able to interact with auxiliary and permanent firefighters to discuss local issues, as well as the operation of the equipment on display.

Neil Kelso
Inspector
Area Director Caboolture
Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, Rural Operations

A range of Flexible Learning for Volunteers products are now available to volunteers and you are encouraged to access and make use of these valuable resources. Talk to your Brigade Training and Support Officer who can give you more information.
During January the cyclonic winds and heavy rain associated with Ex-Tropical Cyclone Oswald affected many communities across Queensland and northern New South Wales, with losses not only to private property but also to critical infrastructure including phone and power supplies. Within Brisbane, the Mount Crosby Water Treatment Plant was one item of infrastructure which was impacted. Damage to this plant, which supplies much of Brisbane with its drinking water, led to the likelihood that some areas within Brisbane may have lost water supplies for drinking and firefighting operations.

With the possible water shortage the Samford Rural Fire Brigade (RFB) brought their 61 appliance, a 4WD Heavy Tanker/Pumper Fire Appliance, into the Roma Street Fire Station to provide additional support to any urban operations which may have occurred. This appliance with a water capacity of 4000 litres was featured in the November edition of the Rural Fire Bulletin.

Samford RFB First Officer Alan Wells and crew were included in the operation of the station and actively participated in turn outs during their overnight stay. Alan said, “it was an interesting experience to see the operation of a busy inner city fire station and to be put out of your comfort zone with respect to ‘knowing your patch’. Being unfamiliar with the road network around Roma Street Station was a challenge. The permanent crews rostered on during our stay were extremely helpful and provided an invaluable insight into the operation of an urban fire station. Samford RFB and its members were happy to be able to assist in any way they could.”

The rural appliance looked at home next to its urban counterparts in the inner city Fire Station.

Neil Kelso
Inspector
Area Director Caboolture
Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, Rural Operations

Samford Rural Fire Brigade takes a one service approach
Claiming Workcover Insurance FAQs

The Queensland Fire and Rescue Service (QFRS) have a policy of insurance with Workcover Queensland. If you sustain an injury or illness where your employment with the RFS has been a significant contributing factor, you may be eligible to claim benefits from Workcover.

Some frequently asked questions are below in relation to claiming Workcover benefits.

**Q** Am I automatically covered?

**A** All registered volunteer Rural Fire Service (RFS) members are covered, provided the injury or illness has occurred due to work that is defined by the Rural Fire Brigade Manual as bone fide work conducted on behalf of the RFS.

**Q** How do I receive my benefits?

**A** Workcover operates like any other insurance company. You must first lodge a claim that Workcover will assess and make a determination if compensation is payable or not payable.

**Q** How do I lodge a claim?

**A** A claim can be lodged online by accessing the Workcover website, [www.workcoverqld.com.au](http://www.workcoverqld.com.au), or by contacting Workcover on 1300 651 387. It is your responsibility to submit the claim, however if possible it is advisable to complete the claim form in conjunction with your Brigade Training and Support Officer or Area Director as this may speed up the determination of the claim.

**Q** How is the determination made?

**A** Workcover will make the determination based on the information you provide on your claim form, the information on the Workcover Medical Certificate provided by the treating Doctor, and the information provided by the QRFS.

**Q** How long will the determination take?

**A** It will usually take one to three days after all the necessary information and reports have been obtained by Workcover.

**Q** Who pays my medical expenses while I am waiting for Workcover to determine the claim?

**A** When you visit a doctor you need to advise them that you intend to submit a Workcover claim, and then the doctor will provide you with a Workers’ Compensation Medical Certificate. If you incur any medical costs prior to the claim being determined by Workcover you will need to retain the invoices and receipts and forward copies to Workcover.

**Q** What benefits may I be entitled to?

**A** If your claim is accepted, Workcover will advise of what medical expenses will be covered by the insurance. Workcover may cover you for lost wages from your usual employment, but you will need to provide the required information for Workcover to determine if this applies to you.

When your claim is registered, Workcover will provide you with the name of your claims officer and a claim number. You will need to refer to this claim number when dealing with Workcover.

**Cyrel Wright**
Senior Workplace Health and Safety Officer
Queensland Fire and Rescue Service
# 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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<td>(07) 4190 4839</td>
<td>(07) 4190 4853</td>
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<td>Roma Area Office</td>
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<td>(07) 5420 1339</td>
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<td>Cairns Area Office</td>
<td>(07) 4042 5468</td>
<td>(07) 4051 2017</td>
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