Wednesday 23 July 2014 - Number 592

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Current National Security Alert Level: Medium

GENERAL

Rollout of Core Skills training

Our Education and Training staff are continuing to deliver vital Core Skills training across the State. In June, training was delivered to Metropolitan North and Regional North 3.

In Met North the old BHP site at Tighes Hill was used. Over five weekends, 10 sessions were conducted enabling 151 firefighters to receive Core Skills training. Firefighters received refresher training in the Orion gas detector/atmospheric monitoring, thermal imaging camera operations, door entry/extinguishing techniques, and SCBA. Station officers received training in incident management, thermal imaging cameras and SCBA.

In Regional North 3 firefighters trained using the refurbished BA semi-trailer. Every station/platoon in this area has now received one visit from the BA semi. In total, 25 sessions were conducted with 209 firefighters receiving Core Skills training.

National Triple Zero review

On 8 July, the Federal Government announced a review of the national Triple Zero operator. The national operator plays an key role in delivering the service by answering calls to Triple Zero from anywhere in Australia and transferring them to the relevant state and territory emergency service organizations.

Emerging technologies are creating new opportunities for the Triple Zero system beyond the current 'voice-only' service. This review looks at the future direction of the service, while considering changes that need to be made to national operator arrangements over the next five to 10 years.

People wishing to comment can complete an online survey or make a submission during the review's public consultation period which ends on 22 August. For more information about the review, visit the website.

Regional Firefighters Championships

Last weekend the Regional Firefighters Championships for the Metro North 1 zone was held at Swansea. 21 Brigades were represented with 17 Teams competing (there were a couple of combined teams). The competition was quite close over the weekend with a number of teams trying new techniques and combinations for the upcoming State Championships to be hosted by the Kelso Brigade in October 2014.

Victorian CFA Team Echuca were the overall winners closely followed by Kelso and Kootingal RFS. Wyong were the Metropolitan Team winners and came in fourth overall. They have displayed great improvement over the past 18 to 24 months.

As I was away in Japan last week Jim Hamilton attending the Championships in my place as Acting Commissioner along with other senior FRNSW officers.
Deputy Captain Nathan Tallon and his crew hosted a well run Championship. 447 Stn were required on a number of occasions to attend fire calls over the weekend, including a car leaking fuel into the lake as a result of an accident on the Pacific Highway at the Swansea Bridge on the Saturday, but this did not stop them from competing in all events and completing all the "behind the scenes" tasks over the two days of competition. Well done Nathan and 447.

AVL working to minimise impact on the community

On Friday 18 July 2014 FireCOMMS received 000 Calls to houses alight in the Riverstone area at 1716hrs,1729hrs and 1740hrs; these were all identified as separate incidents. At 1729hrs FireCOM Operators and Supervisors used AVL information to redirect 94 Station Kellyville, which was already responding to the previous Riverstone incident, to the reported house fire several hundred metres away. After the redirection the teamwork in FireCOM continued with Supervisors and Operators using the real time AVL information to provide updated directions via radio to the correct street. This resulted in a very rapid response to the second call resulting in 94 being on scene within 2 minutes. The Duty Commander MW1 reported that this rapid response limited the damage to part of the Kitchen rather than fire extension to the rest of the house and that the residents and neighbours were very impressed with the rapid response.

A great job by all and clear evidence of the advantages of AVL.

Celebrating 50 years of service by RF Brian Pascoe

Last weekend a dinner was held in Broken Hill to celebrate 50 years of service by Retained Firefighter Brian Pascoe. Since joining the then-NSWFB in 1964, Brian has served his local community with dedication. He has responded to many of the notable incidents in Broken Hill and the surrounding area, including the Century Cinema fire and the blaze in Griffs on Argent Street. I thank Brian for his half century working to serve and protect his local community.

Newcastle Firefighters Ball

Last Saturday Acting Assistant Commissioner Gerry Byrne and Member for Newcastle Tim Owens joined many of our staff, their families and friends to dance the night away at the annual Newcastle Firefighters Ball at Wests Leagues Club, New Lambton. By all reports it was another great night with music provided by Incognito, one of Newcastle's foremost cover bands, and the FRNSW Brass Band. Auctions and raffles were held throughout the night, and the event raised well over $20,000 for burns patients at the John Hunter Children's Hospital and the KIDS Foundation burns support group.

AFAC Board meeting

I returned (sore, but still in one piece) from Okinawa on Monday. Today and tomorrow I am in Perth chairing a meeting of the AFAC Board. The Board will consider a number of crucial issues including a national policy on levels of competency for swift water rescue, future directions for firefighting aircraft, and national certification for incident controllers. While in Perth the Board will visit WA's incident command simulation centre, something which we will ensure is included in a new state training college.

FRNSW Rugby League take on QFRS and NSW Police

On Saturday 12 July at North Sydney Oval, the FRNSW Rugby League Club took on both Queensland Fire and Rescue Service with the Opens team and the NSW Police Force in the Over 35s Masters.

The game kicked off in a positive way with the Masters laying the pathway with a one try to nil win over the Police in a very entertaining game which showed that the older generation still has some tricks up their sleeve. Unfortunately the Opens team could not continue the winning streak and were beaten by the Queenslanders 26-0. A tough final score but all players did extremely well with the opposition running away with the game late in the second half.
The FRNSW team will travel to Queensland next year to take them on upon their home turf. Next month FRNSW will take on the ACT Fire Service for the second time this year to defend the title which we won back in early July.

INCIDENTS

Lakemba unit fire

After midnight on Monday 14 July, crews from Lakemba, Campsie and Bankstown were responded to a unit fire in Wangee Rd, Lakemba. Upon arrival crews were initially unable to identify the location of the unit on fire due to separation of the premises from Wangee Rd.

Once the fire was located, the crews quickly got to work forcing entry to the second floor home unit, and beginning a search for occupants and extinguishment of the fire which had flames leaping from the front window. Six firefighters searched the heavily smoke-loged premises and located an elderly man asleep in one of the two bedrooms. Firefighters rescued the man from the premises; he was then treated by Ambulance paramedics and taken to hospital for observation due to significant smoke inhalation.

This incident received a lot of media attention as Level 1 Firefighter Gary Manttan, who had only been out of the College for five weeks, was involved in rescuing the man. This had been Gary's fifth house fire in as many weeks. Gary was very humbled by the attention and was quick to point out that he had learnt so much in the previous few weeks and had been mentored by a great crew. There was an exceptional team effort and I congratulate all three crews for the work they did.

Gas explosion in George Street Sydney

At 1111 hrs on 14 July RP1 and 38 Stn pumper responded to a report of an explosion in a cafe in George St, City. On arrival, crews were met by a café worker who told them there had been a loud bang and a fireball in the kitchen area. As City of Sydney firefighters entered the cafe they saw two staff members, a man and a woman, being treated for burns to the face and arms. The rescue pumper's crew immediately took over first aid of the patients and continued to treat them until Ambulance officers arrived. Upon further investigation, it was found that a gas explosion had occurred in one of the ovens, sending out a ball of fire. Fortunately this did not result in any further damage to the cafe. Gas supply was isolated and atmospheric monitoring was established in case there was a further buildup of gas in the vicinity. George Street was closed to both pedestrians and traffic while these operations were in place, and WorkCover was notified.

3rd Alarm Hostel fire at Concord

Just before 1800 hrs on Wednesday 16 July, an AFA was reported at a hostel at Parramatta Rd Concord. Due to numerous Triple Zero calls being received, Sydney Comms upgraded the response to a 2nd alarm while crews were enroute.

On arrival 9 minutes after the initial call, Acting Station Officer, Leading Firefighter David Tchappat and crew, were confronted with large amounts of smoke issuing from a 3-level building on Parramatta Rd during Sydney peak hour. Occupants were self-evacuating; however due to heavy smoke logging, some occupants were unable to leave and were visible at level three windows facing a side lane.

The response was upgraded to a 3rd Alarm and Ashfield's crew rescued the occupants from the level three windows using the large extension ladder from the appliance. After bringing these occupants to safety, Ashfield's crew then donned SCBA and commenced fire attack with a 38mm hoseline. 42 Ryde and 30 Lidcombe soon arrived and assisted with firefighting operations. The fire in a ground floor bedroom was quickly brought under control while extensive search and rescue was carried out using BA crews on all three levels of the site. No other occupants were located, however two people were taken to hospital suffering minor burns and smoke inhalation. FIRU and Building Fire Safety staff attended to investigate the incident.
ASK THE COMMISSIONER

Q. I’ve recently realised that You Tube access is not standard across FRNSW FRNSW has a You Tube channel and regularly uploads content through You Tube. Professional development (leadership, conflict resolution) links, also TED talks and Khan Academy are very informative topics.

Stations report that they are also unable to access You Tube and therefore miss out on many interesting and educational opportunities.

While there is reasonable and genuine concern over accessing unsuitable material on this medium, I submit that the existing policy regarding such actions should be seen as an acceptable safeguard. The benefits for firefighters particularly those in remote regional areas outweigh the negatives.

What needs to be done to have universal organisational access to You Tube?

A. We have now opened internet access to just about everything except YouTube. This is because FRNSW has a single 200Mbit connection to the internet. Although this is a large "pipe" compared to what most agencies have and much bigger than it used to be, if lots of people start watching YouTube all at once, the connection will clog up and regular business activity will be impacted.

Most organisations do the same thing for the same reason. It is not to stop people accessing inappropriate sites, because this is covered by existing policy. It is simply a limitation on the size of the internet connection.

Phones and iPads go directly to the internet, so there is no bandwidth constraint there except the cost of the data used.

You can access Ted Talks on [Ted.com](http://Ted.com) rather than using YouTube.

We want to open up YouTube to everyone and get our training videos onto YouTube so they can be viewed on anything, including the TV in high definition.

There are a number of things being done to progressively make this happen. Next week we install a much larger Proxy Server that will help with improving internet performance. By September, we will have enabled guest access to all the wifi access points we have installed in all our offices and fire stations. This will allow the use of personal devices.

A couple more things need to be done before everyone can be given access to YouTube. This includes the installation of a very large network connection to the new data centre and a change to the way the network is architected at the stations. We are currently testing a new way of connecting stations at Glebe. Our goal is to provide simultaneous high speed internet from every station to provide unlimited access to everything. Unfortunately, it will likely be next year before we achieve all of this.

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Q. Is it true that the new AVL system tells ESCAD that a pump has returned to it's base station or is it the case that eOcurrance book is linked to ESCAD?

A. Neither is correct. It is still very important that either a Code 5 is sent by radio, or the ComCen is notified by phone.

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Q. I recently tried, unsuccessfully, to find the eligibility criteria for Senior Firefighter 15 years rank (the third stripe). Although it seems to be self explanatory, there are four possible interpretations:

- Senior Firefighter with 15 years service as a permanent firefighter,
- Senior Firefighter with 15 years service as a firefighter including service as a retained firefighter,
- Senior Firefighter with 15 years service as an employee of FRNSW including retained, trades or administration.
- Senior Firefighter with 15 years service as a Senior Firefighter
I believe that it is the first interpretation but without documentation, I cannot support my belief. Could you please clarify this matter and direct me to the policy that governs this matter?

A. The intent behind the third stripe for Senior Firefighters is firstly, to allow firefighters and officers to easily identify more senior, therefore more experienced, firefighters on a fire ground, and secondly, to acknowledge long service.

A Senior Firefighter with 15 years service as a permanent firefighter is the correct interpretation.

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