

Wednesday 1 October 2014 - Number 597

01 Oct 2014

Current National Security Alert Level: **High**

GENERAL

2014/15 bushfire season launch

Yesterday I joined Police and Emergency Services Minister Stuart Ayres and NSW Rural Fire Service Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons to publicly launch the 2014/15 bushfire season. During the launch we highlighted to the community the importance of all households having a bushfire survival plan as well as preparing their homes. 18-19 October was also promoted as a [Get Ready Weekend](#) when people should prepare themselves, their family and their property to meet the threat of bushfires. It was timely warning on what turned out to be one of the hottest September days on record, and a day when we saw a spate of bush and grass fires including a 3rd Alarm grass fire at Londonderry and a 3rd Alarm bushfire in the Illawarra.

As indicated in last Commish's Corner, the 2014/15 seasonal bushfire outlook has forecast above average temperatures and lower rainfall which are likely to lead to above normal fire activity for most of NSW. As part of our bushfire preparations, Operational Capability, Metropolitan and Regional Operations in cooperation with the Bushfire Section have recently conducted refresher training for senior officers likely to be called upon to act as Strike Team leaders.

Farewell to our Governor

This afternoon Police Commissioner Andrew Scipione and I had the honour of representing the emergency services and presenting a bouquet of wildflowers to our retiring Governor, Dame Marie Bashir AC, CVO. At 1500 hours Dame Marie and her husband Sir Nicholas Shehadie AC left Government House for the last time in an open topped vehicle, escorted by 5 Police VIP motorcycles and a contingent of mounted Police. They proceeded to Macquarie Street outside Parliament House where 10 members of each of the emergency services; Police, FRNSW, Ambulance, RFS and SES, formed an honour guard. An Executive Honour Guard of Commissioners from the 5 services saluted Dame Marie as she pulled up outside Parliament House, then Commissioner Scipione and I made the presentation. At that moment 3 RAAF fighter jets and 2 Hercules C130 transport aircraft did a fly past.

Hundreds of people turned out to watch the emergency services tribute which was the last official engagement of our Governor for the last 13 years. Dame Marie and Sir Nicholas have been strong supporters of the emergency services and of FRNSW during their time in office. However the enduring memories of this Governorship will be of the humanity, empathy and commitment to social justice including issues such as Indigenous welfare, mental health, and education that were championed by our Governor.

Tomorrow I will attend a special reception for the incoming Governor, General David Hurley.

Commissioner's Participative Council – a chance to have your say

I am keen to foster improved communication and innovation within FRNSW and to provide opportunities for all staff, particularly those not in managerial positions, to have more of a say in how we can meet current and future challenges. To achieve this, I am establishing the Commissioner's Participative Council. The Council will neither circumvent nor replace unions' roles, particularly the FBEU, in representing its members in industrial matters.

The Commissioner's Participative Council will be open to staff including permanent and retained firefighters from the ranks of Station Officer and Captain down, and administrative, technical and trades staff from Grade 9/10 Clerks and down (or equivalent trades classifications). Whether you have been part of FRNSW for 30 days or 30 years – you and your ideas are important. The Council will work together to identify internal roadblocks and ensure that good ideas reach the right people who can take action, hopefully reducing needless bureaucracy and red tape.

For more information about what being a Council member involves, see [the intranet article](#). If you are interested in participating, please email a one-page expression of interest outlining your reasons and what you will bring to the role including your skills, background and interest in innovation directly to officeofthecommissioner@fire.nsw.gov.au by 1700 hours 6 October.

FRNSW in the national spotlight - don't miss 'Firies' on Network Ten

FRNSW's lifesaving work will soon take centre stage in lounge rooms across Australia when a new observational documentary series *Firies* premieres on Network Ten.

Over eight weeks the public will get a rare 'behind the scenes' look at the highly skilled and varied work of FRNSW as TV cameras follow 18 Glebe D Platoon and 8 Liverpool B Platoon. *Firies* shows crews responding to the many incidents that are all in a day's work while also highlighting the dangers of common household habits and the importance of fire safety education.

The series launches next Thursday 9 October at Glebe Fire Station and premieres on Network Ten at 6pm on Saturday 11 October. For more information, see the [intranet story](#).

Rollout of ADASHI

ADASHI is an incident management software tool that we have been trialling and modifying for our use. We trialled a version of "ADASHI Command Post (Lite)" with Duty Commanders in Metro West Zones 1 and 2 earlier this year, including at the St Clair 5th Alarm school fire, Kingswood 8th Alarm grass fire, and also at an Alexandria factory fire. The pilot showed that commanders were able to obtain better situational awareness and make informed decisions about resource locations (as the mapping shows real time locations of all appliances), and it also demonstrated the system's operational value. Feedback from the trial was used to further enhance the system which comprises both hardware (laptop with Windows 8.0 and connected to the 4G network) and software (including a range of mapping information, data and other FRNSW resources including SOGs).

Following the success of the trial, I have approved rollout of ADASHI Command Post (Lite) to all commands to replace the old white boards and books that Duty Commanders formerly had to rely upon at major incidents. Inspector Peter Jacobs is currently distributing the devices and delivering training to all Inspectors, and this should be completed in the next few weeks.

The project team is further enhancing the system as users see opportunities for further functionality; including high resolution mapping and mud mapping capabilities. Future versions of ADASHI have the ability to provide mobile data terminals for appliances, and a full version of ADASHI Command Post will be useful for major incidents (such as campaign bushfires). See the [Intranet story](#) for more details.

Streamlining MVA procedures

The NSW Police Force is changing how MVAs are reported in NSW to reduce the number of MVAs that they attend. The aim is to reduce red tape for Police and streamline the process for motorists.

From 15 October, Police only need to be called to attend and investigate MVAs where someone is trapped or injured; where they are needed to direct traffic or deal with hazards; where a bus or truck needs to be towed; or where any of the drivers involved appear to be affected by alcohol or drugs or have failed to exchange

details. In all other cases, drivers should organise their own tow and have their vehicle removed from the scene as quickly and safely as possible. They should also report the crash to the Police Assistance Line on 131 444.

The Incident Controller (in the absence of NSW Police) may request NSW Police attendance through FireCOM stating why Police are needed. See the [website](#) for more information.

Latest CFU newsletter issued

The September edition of the CFU e-newsletter has now been published and is packed with all the latest news of what is happening with our CFUs. The newsletter highlights the recent CFU 20th anniversary which was very successful, as well as various activities as CFUs prepare for a potentially busy fire season. Other topics covered include grants for the CFU program, training programs, research from the October 2013 bushfires and results of the Essay Competition. Click on the following link to read [the latest newsletter](#).

Awards to FRNSW staff

On Wednesday 3 September three of our officers were presented with Australian Fire Service Medals by the NSW Governor. Those receiving AFSMs were Hay Captain Mick Edwards, Kempsey Captain Tony Hackenberg and recently retired Inspector Trevor Bosher. The medals were awarded as part of this year's Queen's Birthday Honours. I congratulate all three officers for their well-deserved awards recognising outstanding effort and service.

Congratulations also to Taree Retained Firefighter Mark Hardy who was awarded Apprentice of the Year at the 2014 NSW Training Awards.

Basic life support training update

The new basic life support (BLS) pre-course assignment can now be completed online on the [Learning Hub](#) up to six weeks prior to a course date once enrolled on a course. The pre-course assignment must be completed in order for the units of competency to be awarded. Attending the course is only one part of the overall BLS qualification.

Under a new partnership between the Ambulance Service of NSW and FRNSW, two Ambulance paramedics have been seconded to the BLS team in the Education and Training directorate. The two staff, Jenny Davidson and David McLeod, have joined the core FRNSW BLS instructors to observe and deliver refresher training across the metropolitan area and the initial training conducted for permanent recruits. The paramedics will also provide practical skills sessions in metropolitan commands. In addition, they will work with the wider group of FRNSW BLS instructors to provide professional development to ensure that our courses deliver the most current content and first aid know-how. This program is a result of station forums I attended where firefighters told me that our BLS instructors are obviously "snowed under" with the workload delivering initial skills and re-certification, and that inclusion of ASNSW paramedics would not only assist with the workload, but build stronger links between our services.

Peer support conference

On Friday 19 September I opened the FRNSW Peer Support Conference, which was attended by 35 members of our Peer Support Team (firefighters and support staff) who volunteer their time to help employees deal with critical incident stress and mental health challenges. Presentations at the conference covered topics including men's mental health presented by the Black Dog Institute, identifying and managing anxiety presented by the Anxiety Clinic from St Vincent's Hospital, and building resilience presented by retired US Army Colonel Dr Glenn Schiraldi.

Traditionally the team has provided support to firefighters exposed to traumatic or stressful incidents, however over the past three years their role has expanded to work with staff to improve their mental health literacy. By increasing our awareness and understanding of mental health, we can improve our ability to recognise possible problems and to help our workmates. If you are concerned about a member of your crew or unit, ask them if they need help. If you need advice on how to go about this, talk to your Manager, call the Employee Assistance Provider on 1300 360 364, talk to a [member of the Peer Support Team](#) or view supporting information available on the [FRNSW Mental Health Toolkit](#).

INCIDENTS

Difficult road rescue at Narellan

Firefighters from 93 Narellan and 248 Camden were confronted with a challenging rescue on Wednesday 24 September. Crews were alerted to an MVA with persons trapped on Narellan Rd, Mount Annan at 1102 hours. The Narellan crew was quickly on scene and was confronted with a passenger sedan firmly wedged between two semi-trailers. Busy Narellan Road was closed to all eastbound traffic as rescuers quickly determined that a young boy and an elderly woman were still inside the vehicle but unable to exit due to both sides of the car being compressed.

The child was quickly released through the rear window of the car within just seven minutes, suffering only minor injuries. However it took another 45 minutes to rescue the trapped woman.

TV helicopters hovered above and filmed the procedure as firefighters were forced to work from the top down and remove the entire roof from the vehicle. With a little bit more decompression of the pillars, the trapped woman was released and, amazingly, able to stand up in her car, step across the seats unaided and step down from the back of her car where she was assessed by Ambulance paramedics for minor injuries only.

The rescue operation proceeded well despite the unusual circumstances of having only limited access to either side of the compressed vehicle. Well done to all involved for some great rescue initiative that ended well for all concerned. The circumstances that led to the car becoming firmly wedged between the two trucks are currently being investigated.

Truck rolls over in hazmat incident on Sturt Highway

At 1015 hours on Monday 29 September, FRNSW was notified of a MVA on the Sturt Highway. A truck containing 12 pallets of farming equipment and a mixed load of chemicals had run off the road and rolled over onto its roof.

Responding FRNSW crews included 472 Turvey Park, 480 Wagga Wagga, 272 Culcairn, 456 Temora and 400 Narandera as well as RFS resources. Ambulance paramedics also attended as a precaution but the male driver fortunately had escaped uninjured.

A 100 metre exclusion zone was established around the accident at the intersection of the Sturt and Olympic Highways. Police blocked the Sturt Highway as firefighters worked to stabilise the rolled truck and to contain the spill of both fuel and chemicals. Crews also set up containment lines and bunded a nearby creek to prevent contamination by the spilt pesticide.

The cleanup continued throughout Monday.

Fighting fire with FaceTime

Early on Saturday morning numerous calls were received to a furniture store alight in Young. 513 Young Rescue Pumper and Composite were on scene quickly and found a 15m X 15M building with a first floor flat well alight, with an exposure on the Bravo side. They got to work with 70mm lines establishing exposure protection while ensuring all occupants were safe, and sent a Red message for urgent back up. Local RFS units responded as well as appliances and crews from 389 Harden, 232 Boorowa, 266 Cootamundra, 308 Grenfell, and 305 Goulburn. 456 Temora Composite responded to Young Fire Station to stand by, and the Duty and Zone Commanders responded. After the initial attack was put in place, 513 Deputy Captain rang the Duty Commander to brief him on the fire. After trying to describe the scene, he told the DC to hang up, and called him back on FaceTime – this enabled Insp Steve Hayes to do a 360° size up in real time, even though he was yet to respond. Tenacious firefighting by all attending crews confined the fire to the building of origin, despite Exposure B directly abutting the burning building. Well done to all.

ASK THE COMMISSIONER

Q: With the success of permanent 'hub' stations such as Tweed Heads, Lismore, Coffs Harbour, and a number of other areas, is FRNSW actively looking to expand this idea in busy and growing regional centres such as Ballina/Byron Bay, Kingscliff/Casuarina, Kempsey and other centres?

A: Not at this stage. We have recently reviewed and redeveloped the Services and Resources Planning process. This planning process has been developed to ensure an improved coordinated approach between the Area Commands, Education and Training, Logistics Support and Finance in planning the future location and type of fire service resources across the State. The hub station concept has been considered in this process however the greatest priority is to provide adequate resources in areas of significant growth in population, industrial, commercial and community infrastructure. Once areas are identified and prioritised business cases then have to be developed, then the Finance & Performance committee recommends priorities for the Commissioner to put forward to State Government Treasury for consideration. Hence future Hub type stations in regional NSW are being looked at but will be dependent on where they sit on the priority list and the available funding.

Q: Everyone is still asking if the new helmets are on track for issue this year per the Commissioners advice earlier? Not long to go and no signs of movement have people sceptical.

A: The Helmet and Integrated Communications Project team led by Chief Superintendent Paul McGuigan from Operational Capability and Assistant Director Guy Tesoriero from Logistics Support, have been working collaboratively with the Office of Finance and Services and the Government's Industry Advisory Group, to apply fresh thinking to meet the challenges of ensuring the safety, operational effectiveness and Standards compliance for the new firefighting helmet. Unfortunately, continued delays with a proposed new Australian Standard presented a challenge to the project team. However, with the support of the FBEU, the project team will shortly engage firefighters to commence a short evaluation of a number of helmets with integrated communication solutions that meet the well established European Standard for Structural Firefighting Helmets. This particular standard has been written with operational firefighters in mind with tests such as; mechanical, thermal, electrical, chemical and field of vision tests, designed around hazards that firefighters regularly encounter. The objective is that results from the evaluation will see enable purchase of new structural helmets for all firefighters within this financial year.

Q: Recently I was informed that all Centel landlines attached to the residence of most Captains/Deputy Captains will be terminated, leaving only a manual diversion capability from the fire station business line, to a single nominated number.

If this is the case, has FRNSW considered supplying Captains/Deputy Captains an alternate means of communication i.e. mobile phone etc. Whilst the ability to divert the station landline to a nominated number is beneficial for receiving calls, this is not the case when an outgoing call needs to be made for station/crew management related matters, as this will still be charged to the personal billing account of the nominated number.

In these modern times more is being asked of retained station managers particularly those that are fully retained staffed. The role of Captain/Deputy is 24/7 and more times than not, duties need to be arranged away from the station. If no consideration has been given to an alternate means, Can we take a look at this idea or something similar?

A: Decommissioning of the Centel system is being considered however before progressing any further, consultation with the FBEU will occur. The matters that you've raised will assist in these discussions.

Commissioner's email: Commissioner@fire.nsw.gov.au

Sandra Garcia, EA to Commissioner: 9265 2930

Ask the Commissioner: OfficeOfTheCommissioner@fire.nsw.gov.au