

Wednesday 16 April 2014 - Number 585

16 Apr 2014

Current National Security Alert Level: Medium

This issue of Commish's Corner comes from Acting Commissioner Jim Hamilton.

GENERAL

Are you ready for Open Day?

In just over a month, on Saturday 17 May 2014, FRNSW fire stations across the State will again host Open Day. This is a significant day in the FRNSW diary which enables firefighters to engage with their local communities, communicate important fire safety messages and promote the work firefighters undertake in protecting the community. This year's Open Day will also mark the launch of FRNSW's Winter Fire Safety Campaign. Participating stations can now access the [Open Day Toolkit](#) on the Intranet for all the supporting information and resources they'll need, including posters, activity sheets, templates of articles to send to local media, and much more. Staff can also visit the Open Day Facebook page [here](#).

Inaugural Commissioner's Safety Awards launched

The inaugural Commissioner's Safety Awards Program kicked off last week with applications now being accepted for the nomination of individuals or groups who have made outstanding efforts to improve or promote safety within FRNSW. Maintaining a safe and healthy workforce begins with each one of us, so I encourage you to make decisions, lead by example and work together to keep yourself and each other safe. Please take time to nominate yourself or someone else who you believe should be recognised for their achievements which improve or promote safety. Please see the [Commissioner's Safety Awards toolkit](#) for details on the categories and how to nominate.

Have your say about the future of rescue

A report, [Building a Rescue Capability Roadmap](#), has been published to present the ideas generated at December's FRNSW Rescue Summit. It examines FRNSW's current role in rescue delivery and the ways we can develop our future rescue capability. It's now your turn to have a say; I encourage you to have a look at the report and to send your feedback to operational_improvement@fire.nsw.gov.au.

Retained Award

I am pleased to see that negotiations on the Retained Award are nearing finalisation in the Industrial Relations Commission. Once the Award is finalised information sessions will be provided to Retained Firefighters, Station Commanders and Management teams. Any enquiries should be directed to RetainedAward@fire.nsw.gov.au

Inspector Promotional Program Feedback survey

Last year we implemented a merit based selection process to gain entry on to the Inspector's Promotional Program. Feedback to candidates was a critical component of the process, which they said was very thorough, useful and informative. To help shape future requirements, it is also essential for us to hear and

learn from the experiences of those candidates who applied. To achieve this we have recently asked each person who undertook the process about their experience via a survey.

The survey is an opportunity to provide valuable insight into the IPP Pre-Entry Test experience. This insight will allow us to understand what aspects of the process are well designed, what aspects could be improved and the overall applicant experience.

SOPP pre-entry test update

It is pleasing to see strong interest in the next SOPP. We have received many enquiries from people keen to learn more about the SOPP entry test requirements and how these may change to reflect more modern recruitment practices.

I am confident there is an appetite for change and we have received strong support from firefighters to make the process much fairer, transparent, and based on merit.

Over the next few weeks we will meet with the FBEU to consult on the content and format of the entry requirements. We also plan to establish a firefighter consultative group to work with us to help inform the requirements of the new pre-entry test. More information on the work of this group will be provided over the next few weeks. In the meantime, if you have any queries, please email SOPPenquiries@fire.nsw.gov.au

HO relocation

Last week plans for the new Head Office were shared with head office staff. I'm pleased to be able to share with you both the concept designs of the exterior ([click here to see design](#)) and the interior floor plan ([click here to see design](#)) of our new head office at Greenacre. These designs are in draft form and I welcome your feedback at 1Amarina@fire.nsw.gov.au.

A group of staff representatives of each Head Office Directorates has been established to explore new working models to reflect the new HO design. This group will provide more information as it becomes available.

Employee Engagement

Recently the Commissioner commented on an approach we would like to take to work with you to hear and learn about your ideas. Employee engagement is more than simply giving feedback – it is a holistic approach about creating opportunities for you to connect with your colleagues, line managers, and the wider organisation.

In an organisation such as ours, engagement can be challenging as we are geographically dispersed, operate under a "chain of command" type structure, and sometimes forget to acknowledge or appreciate other people's ideas. These are barriers which we must overcome. The only way we are going to collectively achieve this is for you and I to continually raise awareness about what it takes for all employees to be engaged. In the last Commissioner's Corner it was suggested that you look at some articles on employee engagement and a number of people responded expressing their optimism and support. Please continue to email your comments, questions or concerns to EmployeeEngagement@fire.nsw.gov.au.

Young Leaders Conference

The Australian School of Applied Management recently conducted a one day NSW Public Sector Young Leaders Conference at Rydges Hotel in Sydney. FRNSW sponsored a table of emerging leaders from Metropolitan and Regional Operations, Operational Support Directorates (and Trades and Admin staff.

The feedback from FRNSW personnel who attended has been nothing but positive. Not only did attendees find great value in being able to interact and build networks with future leaders from a diverse range of public sector departments, but also build relationships with other FRNSW staff members they wouldn't usually get the opportunity to meet. There was much interest and discussion about how ideas and strategies that emerged from the conference topics could be implemented into the different roles and challenges facing young leaders at FRNSW.

I would like to thank Senior Firefighter Sam Wall of Dee Why Fire Station for taking the lead in contributing to this article, as well as thanking the other participants who contributed and provided feedback regarding their experience on this day.

Retained Firefighter Ambrose Crittenden

It was with deep regret that I learned of the tragic death of Retained Firefighter Ambrose Crittenden in a car accident on 6 April whilst he was off duty. The crew from Jerilderie Fire Station, which included Ambrose's father, Deputy Captain John Crittenden, responded to the accident. Ambrose's twin brother Ignatius is also a Jerilderie retained firefighter. Ambrose was in critical condition when the crew arrived at the accident and whilst they and the Ambulance officers did all they could Ambrose was taken to hospital but unfortunately died soon after.

Assistant Commissioner Rob McNeil and I joined many FRNSW colleagues attended Ambrose's funeral which was held on Friday 11 April, where we were able to express our deepest condolences to Ambrose's family and the Jerilderie firefighters with whom he served.

Launch of the 'Change your clock, change your battery' campaign

On Friday 4 April, Commissioner Greg Mullins joined Duracell representatives and NSW Rural Fire Service Assistant Commissioner Steve Yorke to urge NSW residents to check their smoke alarm batteries when they changed their clocks on 6 April. It was pleasing to see the great support from FRNSW fire stations across the State, who contacted their local media outlets to help promote this important message. A special thanks to the team at CEU and Mascot and Broken Hill fire stations for their work hosting targeted engagement events with seniors in their communities as part of this campaign.

ANZAC Day March and FRNSW Remembrance Service

Friday 25 April 2014 is ANZAC Day. Off-duty personnel and families are welcome to attend the FRNSW ANZAC Day Remembrance Service at City of Sydney Fire Station which commences at 0800 hours. Following the Service, a FRNSW contingent will participate in the Sydney ANZAC March. FRNSW is the only non-military group sanctioned by the RSL to march as a contingent on ANZAC Day. The aim of the ANZAC Day March is to give the participating veterans and the public an opportunity to honour those who served in the defence of Australia or its interests. For full details, see the email sent to all staff on 10 April.

Nominations open for the Premier's Awards for Public Service

Nominations for the NSW Premier's Awards for Public Service have opened. The Awards recognise excellence in delivering public services. This year's Awards focus on customer service, recognising projects that enhance service delivery and outcomes; build a strong customer service culture; and place customers at the heart of service. The Awards gives FRNSW a real opportunity to be recognised as delivering critical services to the community and meeting the goals of NSW 2021.

I encourage you to nominate your team, crew, colleagues or other units to showcase our achievements and the important contribution we make in provision of emergency services. For more information about the Awards and categories, visit www.publicserviceawards.nsw.gov.au, entries close 11 July 2014. For enquiries about the nomination process, contact Chief Superintendent Mal Connellan on 9265 2678.

INCIDENTS

6th Alarm factory fire at Yennora

At 1552 hrs on Wednesday 9 April, crews responded to reports of a factory fire in Larra Street at Yennora. As 73 Fairfield crew approached they realised that the 70 x 50 metre structure was already fully involved and called for a 4th Alarm response. Fire had very quickly taken hold of an auto spare parts factory with numerous stacked wrecked vehicles, tyres and workshop materials involved in the rapidly developing fire. The huge black smoke plume was visible from across the Sydney Metropolitan area as further crews responded. The biggest concern was that fire would spread sideways in both directions into the adjoining factory complexes.

Numerous explosions believed to be acetylene cylinders prevented first arriving crews from entering the building. An external defensive strategy using numerous handlines was successfully deployed from sectors A and C; and with the help of aerial appliances, crews were able to prevent fire spread into adjoining factories in sectors B and D. Given the extreme fuel loading inside the burning structure, responding fire crews and the incident management team achieved an excellent result in quickly containing and bringing the fire under control within an hour.

Two silo fires within two days

Fire crews were confronted with not one, but two major silo fire incidents in two days.

The first occurred at 1446 hrs on Tuesday 8 April at a food processing plant on Epping Road at Lane Cove North. It appears as though spontaneous combustion occurred within a large canvas silo containing 9 tons of gluten powder inside a large shed area. The food plant is the only one of its kind in Australia and plant management explained that they believed this was the first time that such a fire event had occurred in any such facility. Responding firefighters, Hazmat crews and the incident management team enacted the [Standard Operational Guidelines \(SOGs\) for silo fires](#) and additionally had to use their initiative in dealing with the situation.

Dust explosion was a real possibility and protection crews were deployed on either side of the silo in case the situation escalated while the CO₂ tender was deployed to flood the silo with CO₂ in an attempt to cool and extinguish the fire. Roads and Maritime Service crews and numerous Police were deployed into the area in preparation for large scale evacuations and to shut down Epping Road and close the busy Lane Cove Tunnel if required. The product was carefully and successfully removed through the base of the silo and extinguished over a period of about four hours with no damage to the silo structure. Well done to everyone for averting a major explosive situation.

The next day, Wednesday 9 April, it was Newcastle's turn to deal with another potential explosive situation when crews were called at 1332 hrs to a silo fire in the Newcastle Bulk Facility at Kooragang. The facility management advised that welding had taken place on top of the bulk facility measuring 35m in height and 20m in diameter containing 12,500 tons of carbon powder. Welding staff were alerted by installed detectors that a temperature rise inside the huge vessel had occurred.

The site was immediately evacuated as fire crews and an incident management team were responded. The John Hunter Hospital was placed on standby and FRNSW's Scientific Officer, together with Hazmat crews, were responded to assist with managing the situation. Atmospheric monitoring, together with thermal imaging detection determined that the fire was in fact in the void space above the carbon powder product. Firefighters performed a delicate operation of drilling several holes through the roof of the silo above the heated area and then introducing a fine mist spray into the void to successfully extinguish the fire. It took crews about seven hours to prevent fire spread into the carbon powder and finally extinguish the fire.

These two incidents highlighted the extreme dangers that can be associated with silo fires and the importance of knowing the correct strategies to be deployed. At both of these incidents, correct SOGs were deployed, ensuring the safety of workers, community and responding fire crews. I urge all firefighters to take the opportunity to review the [Special Incident SOG 8.2](#) and refresh their understanding of the proper procedures to be deployed.

ASK THE COMMISSIONER

Q. Is it true that Retained Firefighters are only allowed to order a Galetea after 10 years of service?

A. No, the policy that relates to Galetea issue for Retained firefighters states that the issue can occur prior to attendance at a Fire & Rescue NSW official function that requires wearing of a Galetea, there is no time restriction.

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

Sandra Garcia, EA to Commissioner: 9265 2930

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

To contribute a story, please contact the Media and Communications Unit: 9265 2907