

Wednesday 8 March 2014 - Number 582

05 Mar 2014

Current National Security Alert Level: Medium

GENERAL

Tamworth takes line honours at Mudgee Championship

Wet weather failed to dampen neither the spirits nor the enthusiasm of teams competing last weekend at the RW2 Zone Regional Firefighter Championships in Mudgee. I was impressed by the level of skills on display as 19 teams battled it out in 11 different events. Congratulations to Tamworth, the overall winners, followed by Dorrigo in second place and Kootingal RFS close behind in third place. Kelso came first in the Aggregate In Zone score.

Fully encapsulated suits

After a major review that concluded most stations never ever use their fully encapsulated (FE) suits, FRNSW has been consulting with the FBEU about a planned reduction in the number carried on pumpers. We currently have more than 2,000 FE suits, most of which are never used, and plan to progressively reduce this number to about 900 over the remainder of 2014. This will mean FE suits will be taken off pumpers except near identified risks such as major transport routes, major hazard facilities or plants with large amounts of chlorine or ammonia. At the same time, the number of FE suits held in key locations such as Primary and Intermediate Hazmat stations, and the Hazmat Technical Service Centre, will be increased. As soon as consultation with the union is finalized, stations will receive detailed information packages.

The detailed analysis shows that this will not impact on our capability to deal with hazmat incidents safely and effectively. It showed that FE Suits are worn at less than two incidents per 1,000; and of these, 29% did not require FE suits to be worn (in these cases, spillage/splash suits would have provided appropriate protection based on the substances involved). The allocation of spillage/splash suits will remain unchanged. More to follow.

Smoke alarm campaign

FRNSW in conjunction with Duracell will launch the 'Change Your Clock, Change Your Smoke Alarm Battery' 2014 campaign in the weeks leading up to 6 April. The campaign's key message is a call to action for households to check and replace their smoke alarm batteries at the end of daylight saving when they change their clocks.

We will promote the campaign through various community events in both city and regional areas. Our Community Engagement Unit will be distributing promotional material to all FRNSW fire stations to help increase public awareness that 'only working smoke alarms save lives'.

Update on Victorian deployment

Our deployment to Victoria has continued over the last fortnight. I returned to Victoria on Monday as a member of the expert panel assisting in reviewing the Hazelwood mine fire Incident Action Plan. We have also deployed crews and the compressed air foam (CAFS) pumper from 31 Busby, which I witnessed in action as I flew over the mine. CAFS has proven to be very effective with units from Tasmania, the ACT, NSW and Qld sent to assist.

This protracted incident is impacting on Victorian fire agency resources and their ability to manage the fires and fatigue, as such, I have also approved a request to deploy Hazardous Materials firefighters as replacement staff in the teams managing the Hazelwood Mine fire.

Since 19 February, we have continued to deploy firefighters to backfill Victorian fire stations. Ten crews have been deployed on a rotating basis to the fire stations of Frankston, Patterson River, Dandenong, Morwell, Traralgon, Bendigo, Shepparton, Ballarat City, Geelong City and Corio where they are co-crewing with Victorian firefighters.

Primary Rescue Operator Training Program commences

I recently recorded an [introductory video](#) for the new Primary Rescue Operator Program (PROP), which commenced last Friday. Permanent firefighters attached to primary rescue stations, who hold the minimum rank of Qualified Firefighter, can apply to undertake this program in order to become registered as primary rescue operators. The online resources, including a totally revised *Rescue Training Manual* and a series of short videos, are also available for all other firefighters who are likely to attend a rescue incident.

Education and Training personnel have been visiting primary rescue stations to explain how the new program operates. More details are available in the [PROP Training Toolkit](#) including a [Flow Chart](#), [Question and Answer sheet](#) and [Application to Become a Primary Rescue Operator Form](#).

Rescue Summit report

The program described above is partly a result of the Summit held last year. A draft report has been received from the facilitators, and we plan to release it before the end of March. However in the meantime Education & Training and Operational Capability have not stood still and are working hard on issues such as vertical rescue equipment and training, swift water rescue, and Level 4 flood rescue using Fire Air 1.

Retained Award

I am hopeful that a joint announcement with the FBEU will be possible in the next week or 2 on a Consent Award for Retained Firefighters. A great deal of hard work has gone into this, and the feedback has been listened to. The original proposal by FRNSW was abandoned as a result of this feedback, and the FBEU advanced a proposal which we have been jointly developing since then. I am pleased that in

these constrained times FRNSW and the FBEU can still work cooperatively on important matters such as this.

Seniors Week

This year, Seniors Week is March 17-23 and coincides with the 'Change Your Clock, Change Your Smoke Alarm Battery' campaign. We will be encouraging seniors to check that their smoke alarms are working.

As part of the campaign, Duracell is providing FRNSW with 11,000 9V alkaline batteries. These will be used by fire stations for the SABRE program and at various community events in areas identified as high fire risk. Fire stations across NSW will be participating in various Seniors Week events, many in conjunction with local Councils, Red Cross and Home Care branches.

I encourage you to get involved with the campaign, whether through the media to promote your local SABRE program or by attending a Seniors Week event. This is a good opportunity to engage local at-risk seniors and ensure their smoke alarms are working. If you require assistance with your Seniors Week event, please contact CEU's Community Safety Coordinator for Ageing and Disabilities on 02 9742 7404.

Spreading fire safety messages to Aboriginal communities

On 13 February, retained firefighters at 454 Tarro held a Firefighters' Perspective exercise for Aboriginal participants who are helping to spread the word on home fire safety within their communities. We are conducting seven of these exercises at fire stations throughout NSW this year, targeting the Indigenous population given that incident data identifies Indigenous Australians as being at higher risk of home fire.

The exercise at Tarro included the use and safe operation of fire extinguishers and fire blankets, and use of equipment used by firefighters. Well done 454.

2014 Mardi Gras Parade

Last Saturday FRNSW participated in the 36th annual Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade which was watched by hundreds of thousands of spectators as well as a television audience of millions. The FRNSW contingent comprised an off-line fire appliance and a community education vehicle, accompanied by firefighters, CFU volunteers and support staff.

FRNSW's participation in the parade underlined our commitment to equality and diversity in the workplace. It also enabled us to promote key fire safety messages through banners displayed on the vehicles. Next year will mark the 10th time that FRNSW has participated in the parade.

I am aware that to some people this is a controversial issue. One of our fire stations put it like this on their message board, and I don't think I can think of better way to say it: "Fires don't discriminate, and neither do we. Happy Mardi Gras!"

'400 in 4' rides again

The 2014 FRNSW '400 in 4' Charity Bike Ride is fast approaching, with the event to kick off in Wagga Wagga on Tuesday 24 March. The 26 riders, most of whom are firefighters, will ride from Wagga Wagga to The Children's Hospital at Westmead over four days. Along the way, they will raise money for the hospital's Burns Unit and will visit schools and local communities to promote fire safety and awareness.

Details of the ride and a full list of the riders are on the website, www.400in4.org, or on Facebook www.facebook.com/Fire400in4. All riders involved are selling tickets in a giant raffle which will be drawn at the Hospital on Friday 28 March. If you are interested in supporting the event, contact any of the group as there are some great prizes.

Since 2006, the ride has raised nearly \$300,000, which the Burns Unit has used to fund an Anaesthetist Fellow to help with the kids' pain management and also the refurbishment of a burns theatre which has been named after the event. It is hoped to add to this amount in 2014 by raising at least \$50,000, so your support would be appreciated.

Newcastle Firefighters Ball

Newcastle and Hunter firefighters will hold their annual fundraising ball on Saturday 19 July at West Leagues Club, Hobart Road, New Lambton. Everyone is welcome, bring along your family and friends for a great time. Entertainment on the night will be provided by the FRNSW Brass Band and Precision Marching Team, with music by Incognito.

Cost is \$120 per head, with auctions and raffles also held to raise funds for charity. The 2013 Ball raised \$34,500, of which \$28,000 was given to John Hunter Children's Hospital and the remaining \$6,500 to K.I.D.S. Foundation. Since the Ball's inception in 2000, a total of \$373,250 has been donated to assist burns survivors.

Bandaged Bear Day

On Thursday 27 March, the Westmead Children's Hospital will be running Bandaged Bear Day. Show your support by making a donation or purchasing Bandaged Bear Merchandise. Every dollar donated to The Children's Hospital at Westmead helps to improve the lives of seriously sick children. You can also host a **Bandaged Bear Fundraiser**, or test your physical and mental limits by participating in the **Grin and Bear it Challenge on Sunday 23 March. For more information, see the [intranet story](#).**

2014 NSW Police Games

2014 is the 30th anniversary of the NSW Police Games, which this year runs 15-30 March. The Games are held annually in various locations, mainly in the Blacktown area. There are over 30 sports to choose from, and emergency services personnel including FRNSW staff are eligible to compete.

Details and registration are available at www.nswpolicegames.com.au The cost of the one-off registration is \$40 plus a sports fee which varies between sports. Sports Association members may be eligible to claim reimbursement of some associated costs after the Games. For further information, please refer to the website or contact FRNSW-affiliated sports clubs (eg soccer, touch football etc).

INCIDENTS

Chemical spill at Park Hyatt Sydney

At 0933 hours on Monday 24 February, FRNSW responded to the Park Hyatt Sydney Hotel in The Rocks. Someone had incorrectly mixed pool chemicals, resulting in chlorine fumes carrying through the building via the airconditioning system. Around 75 guests and staff were evacuated from the Hotel as a precaution while the incident was underway.

Firefighters in spillage suits moved the mixture from the 3rd storey to the 4th storey where they dispensed it into the swimming pool. They also neutralised the spill and ventilated the building. Seven people were assessed by Ambulance paramedics and transported to hospital with minor respiratory problems. Those evacuated were allowed to re-enter the building shortly after 1100 hours. Responding resources were the CoS Flyer, and Heavy Hazmat and Hazmat Pumper from 13 Alexandria.

Overtaken cement truck in Chatswood

At 0743 hrs on Wednesday 26 February, FRNSW responded to Devonshire Street, Chatswood where a concrete truck had destabilised on a building site. The truck was pumping concrete to the 4th floor of a building under construction when a stabilizing jack punched through the concrete slab, causing it to topple over, leaving its boom resting on the building. Fortunately no-one was injured in the incident.

NSW Police Force were also in attendance. An exclusion zone was set up and around 60 people were evacuated from neighbouring units, houses and a childcare centre as a precaution during the operation while traffic was diverted.

USAR1 attended to provide stabilisation. The truck was eventually righted using two heavy duty cranes brought to the site. Engineers inspected the building damaged in the incident. WorkCover was notified and attended to investigate. The incident concluded at 1322 hrs.

FRNSW resources responding included Pumper 40 Willoughby, Rescue 68 Narrabeen, Rescue Pumper 36 Crows Nest, and USAR 1.

ASK THE COMMISSIONER

Q. With regards to the CFA deployment for the coal mine fire why isn't FRNSW spreading the workload and sending a mixture of both retained and permanent firefighters? A lot of retained work rosters and could quite easily be away without affecting primary employment.

A. The deployment to Victoria is to backfill permanently staffed Country Fire Authority stations and the CFA requested permanent firefighters. It also needs to be remembered that the majority of interstate deployments to Victorian bushfires have been almost solely retained firefighters. We have ensured therefore that the workload is shared around.

Q. Is it true that due to the budgetary constraints Fire & Rescue NSW is considering the scaling down of the Chaplaincy services?

A. No way. Our Chaplains Lyndsay and Dawn and their Associate Chaplains are available 24/7, do amazing work, and have helped legions of firefighters, support staff and families over the years. The small amount we pay to the Salvation Army is money very well spent.

Q: Years ago when the current red retained firefighter chevrons for years of service were introduced, the multi-coloured chevrons showing years of service were withdrawn, which was a shame. Can we look at reintroducing some form of recognition for lengthy service through different colours for those with more than 15 years service?

A: Over to you – please e-mail Office of the Commissioner with your thoughts on this and I will report in a later issue of CC.

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