

Wednesday 19 February 2014 - Number 581

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Current National Security Alert Level: Medium

GENERAL

Victorian assistance #1

My thanks to the firefighters and officers on incident management teams who assisted the Victorian Country Fire Authority (CFA) during their recent bushfire emergency.

On Wednesday 29 January, Supt Paul Bailey and SF Robert Strauch were the first FRNSW members to join a multi-agency team working out of the Seymour and Shepparton incident control centres, managing fires in Kilmore and Shepparton. They were eventually relieved by Insp Michael Jay and QF John Sullivan, who were in turn relieved by Insp Steven Moran and SO Glen Mole. The final FRNSW incident managers to be deployed were Insp Stuart Mitchell and SF Richard Wilson.

On Sunday 9 February, a contingent of 8 appliances and around 40 Retained firefighters from regional NSW headed to Shepparton. Crews from Albury North, Albury, Corowa, Gundagai, Turvey Park, Temora, Berrigan and Jerilderie formed two strike teams, led by Insp Stewart Alexander and Insp Darryl Manson. Also deployed were the FRNSW rehabilitation van from Culcairn, SO Daniel Humphrey and RFF Paul Maher with a logistics vehicle from the Training Centre in Deniliquin. By the afternoon of Sunday 9 February our firefighters were heavily involved attacking fires in the Numerkah region and protecting properties, including a hospital, in difficult circumstances.

After the initial fire runs on Sunday there was still plenty of property protection work to be done. On Wednesday 12 February, strike team members were relieved by Strike Team Charlie from RW3 led by DC Andrew Ticehurst and comprising Griffith, Hay and Leeton tankers.

Victorian assistance #2

Today 8 Class 3 pumpers and 2 aerial pumpers are on their way to various Victorian regional centres and outer Melbourne suburbs in order to release CFA permanent firefighters and appliances so that they can attend a major fire in an open cut coal mine near Morwell. Together with Chief Supt Mal Connellan I have spent the last 2 days at Morwell reviewing and advising on the incident action plan. Upon my return this afternoon, together with FBEU Secretary Jim Casey, I farewelled the first contingent of 30 SOs and FFs as they departed Sydney Airport. The deployment, at this stage will last 2 weeks. I am pleased that NSW is in a position to return the

favour to our Victorian colleagues who so readily assisted us during our own fire crisis in October last year.

My thanks to those who have and will deploy to Victoria, to Logistics Support and Metro Operations for arranging appliances, and to station crews who had to deal with some temporary appliance inventory issues as we rapidly stowed 10 SEV appliances to backfill the Scania Class 3s sent to Victoria. The FBEU also assisted in determining and agreeing payment details for this unprecedented deployment.

On-Shift Primary Rescue Operator training package

Following recommendations from the Industrial Relations Commission the new On-Shift Primary Rescue Operator Program has been developed. The program is scheduled to commence on Friday 28 February 2014. Permanent firefighters who are attached to a primary rescue station and who hold the minimum rank of Qualified Firefighter will be eligible to apply to undertake this program, which is self paced and will be completed on-shift.

The new program is underpinned by a totally revised and up-dated *Rescue Training Manual* supported by online videos, practical exercises and theory assessments. As candidates complete specific components of the program they apply to undertake assessment of those components. The overall face-to-face assessments will normally take a total of 80 hours and will be completed by the candidate under the supervision of a Rescue Instructor from Education and Training.

Applications to commence primary rescue operator training under this new system will open from Friday 28 February 2014. More detailed information about the program and the application process will be available shortly.

Multi-agency flood rescue exercise

Next Wednesday 26 February I will be at the Sydney Regatta Centre in Penrith to attend a multi-agency flood rescue training exercise involving Fire & Rescue NSW and the State Emergency Service (SES) using FireAir 1. In 2013 FRNSW and the SES conducted its first helicopter flood rescue exercise at the same venue. The day was a great success and highlighted the fact that Level 4 Flood Rescue (using helicopters) is a unique and specialist rescue capability. The upcoming event will once again demonstrate the skill and expertise of FRNSW in this area – something which we will develop further given that we are the only agency with this capability.

Flu vaccine program

Bookings for the 2014 FRNSW Influenza vaccination clinics are now open. Influenza is highly contagious and is spread by contact with droplets in the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes or by touching surfaces where the droplets have landed. It is therefore easily spread in work environments and transport systems. Most people recover from influenza, but for some it can be life threatening.

I urge all FRNSW employees to take action and avoid illness this year by having the free flu shot and stopping infections before they start. To ensure enough vaccines are ordered, bookings are essential. For more information on the vaccination,

FRNSW clinic dates/locations and to book your vaccination, please go to <http://home:81/health/medical/?q=node/28>.

Quakers Hill Nursing Home re-opening

On Friday 28 February I will attend the official opening of the new Quakers Hill Nursing Home. The original facility was severely damaged by fire on 28 November 2011. Twenty appliances were deployed to the scene with nearly 100 firefighters who, despite thick black smoke, zero visibility, falling roof tiles and intense fire, pressed on with locating trapped residents and moving them to safety. In all, 88 aged, sick and frail residents were rescued by nursing home staff and firefighters with assistance from police. The fire resulted in the largest loss of life in a fire in NSW for over 30 years. In the time since, findings from our Fire Investigation and Research Unit, along with data collected in AIRS, has led to the Department of Planning changing legislation to mandate sprinklers in all NSW nursing homes.

Regional Firefighter Championships, Mudgee

I look forward to attending the RW2 Zone Regional Firefighter Championships in Mudgee on the weekend of 1 – 2 March. It's sure to be a great event, with 22 teams so far registered – seven from within the zone and another 15 from out of zone. They will compete in 11 events, all of which simulate different firefighting and rescue scenarios. After this, there will be two more Regional Firefighter Championships this year, in Unanderra and Swansea, ahead of the State Championships in Kelso in October.

Minor Fleet registration labels Feb 2014

Be aware that there will be no delivery of minor fleet and trailer registration labels for 2014 – 2015. Light vehicles including motorcycles and trailers up to 4.5 tonnes no longer require rego labels.

INCIDENTS

2nd Alarm – Matraville

Quick work by firefighters averted a lengthy incident at the Port Botany Waste Transfer Station on Friday 7 February 2014. Crews were alerted at 2320 hrs to the 20 x 30 metre metal-framed building in Military Road, Matraville, when the AFA activated due to a fire in quantities of stacked waste paper. These types of fires have the potential to become protracted incidents tying up many resources. However, on this occasion, early notification via the AFA and quick work by responding crews from 56 Matraville, 70 Maroubra, 35 Botany, 26 Mascot, 39 Randwick, 11 Woollahra and 01 City of Sydney successfully and quickly contained the fire to the area of origin.

The booster system was utilised to ensure good water pressure in the internal hydrant system. Several hose lines were deployed together with the use of an excavator to pull the piles of burning materials apart, with Ladders 11 used as an elevated master stream.

2nd Alarm – Mount Lewis

Fire Comms received numerous 000 calls to a building alight in Wattle Street, Mt Lewis, at 1202 hrs on Saturday 8 February. 62 Bankstown arrived on scene within 7 minutes and upon observing large amounts of smoke issuing from the roof of a two-level building, sent a red message for a 2nd Alarm. Quick offensive attack was successful in bringing the fire under control. Crews gained access and commenced an internal attack to contain the fire to a rear store room area, which was stacked with hair care products, including numerous aerosol cans. Despite numerous small explosions, crews in SCBA were able to contain the blaze. There were fears that the fire would spread into an adjoining automotive repair factory so crews forced entry to secure the exposure.

Crews from 62 Bankstown, 64 Lakemba, 34 Riverwood, 47 Revesby, 52 Campsie and 21 Kogarah attended.

ASK THE COMMISSIONER

Q. Given that the new structural firefighting gear is intended only to be used for structural firefighting and is to be removed when not actively involved in those operations (and certainly not to be used during normal bush firefighting), why are senior officers being interviewed on TV in full structural PPE? Is that not sending mixed messages to both the public and firefighters? Surely an incident commander's tabard would look more professional?

A. I can see the point you are raising, however, it is important that the public clearly identifies with our uniform without confusion with other agencies. Also, the reflective vest is not "camera friendly". When I became Commissioner I stopped the practice of senior officers giving fire ground interviews in peak cap and dress uniform due to the public perception that they were Police officers.

Q. " the new Government Sector Employment (GSE) Act that is to come into effect on 24 February 2014, which specifies that all public sector recruitment will be a merit-based selection."

In keeping with this GSE Act, will this mean the end of Country Transfer lists and allow all positions to be selected on Merit?

A. Currently the process for selection for country transfer positions is based upon provisions outlined in the Permanent Award which requires consent between FRNSW and the FBEU to change. The Award will shortly expire and negotiations will commence. This clause may or may not be discussed.

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To contribute a story, please contact the Media and Communications

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