



Mt Wilson/Mt Irvine Rural Fire Service April 2007

Brigade Newsletter

APRIL 2007

FROM THE PRESIDENT

The Brigade needs YOUR help

The November fires were a valuable opportunity for the Brigade to evaluate its existing operations and to identify where improvements could be made. As a result, the Brigade is reorganising its operations and support for better management of emergencies. Call outs can last from an hour to several weeks. We can be called out to a medical emergency, a motor vehicle accident, a house fire, or a bushfire.

A bushfire call can be to just put out a spot fire which might take a couple of hours and involve one crew, or it can be a campaign similar to last November and December which involved multiple crews and fire trucks operating around the clock.

At the last Annual General Meeting various members of the community were appointed to a range of support roles. Their contribution has been valuable and each of these people will continue in their particular area of responsibility. In an emergency extending over a longer period, however, more than one person is needed to ensure that the work load is shared evenly. Sometimes the people with experience are not present in the villages at the time of the call out, or not available for some reason.

In many cases, people are willing to be involved but uncertain what they will be asked to do and therefore hesitate to volunteer.

Our goal is to have a larger number of people who are trained to fill all these roles. We have split the required operations and support into several areas, and detailed their responsibilities, outlined in this newsletter.

We need volunteers.

So, we are asking people in the community to review the various roles which are listed and volunteer for some of the positions. We do not expect people to be immediately experienced. We will provide training and support procedures and checklists, and will make sure people who are uncertain have an opportunity to work with someone more experienced so they feel confident before they take on extra responsibilities.

For further information or to volunteer please contact me at howelldj@ozemail.com.au, or Peter Raines on peter_raines@hotmail.com.

David Howell, President



THE ACTIVITY FORMERLY KNOWN AS THE 'EASTER BUNNY' ...

May 26th and 27th are the dates for the Blue Mountains Quest which has been nicknamed "The Akubra Run" and will replace the traditional "Easter Bunny" event prior to Easter.

The event will remain a navigation, map reading, radio and 4 x4 driving exercise. It will cover territory on the following maps - Mt Wilson, Hampton, Edith, Jenolan, Shooters Hill, Kanangra, Gurnang, Yerranderie, Mt Armstrong and Bindook. Please contact Peter Raines if you would like to attend. Each year, without fail, it has proven to be tremendous fun and highly instructive.

Find us at <http://mtwilson.rfsa.org.au>

FROM THE CAPTAIN

As mentioned elsewhere, the Brigade is reviewing its operations and support to better manage emergencies.

The following people already have responsibility for roles as follows:

Catering Officers	Milba Mewburn, Susie Hope	Communications Officer	Milba Mewburn
Equipment Officer	Beth Raines	Fire Trail Manager	Peter Dempsey
Logistical Support	Graham Tribe	Membership Secretary	Judy Tribe
OH & S Officer	Stephen Dean	Training Coordinator	Penny Ewing
First Aid Officers	Phillip & Jane Beeby	Water Manager	Doug Wood
Community Education Officer	Brian Abrahams		
Hazard Reduction Coordinator	Henric Nicholas		

The roles below have been defined as needing additional trained volunteers to share the work load and to provide support in extended emergencies:

1. Station Commander



This person takes charge of the Fire Station to provide necessary support to Operations (active fire fighters). In a short emergency this might only mean communication with Fire Control and the crew in the field. In a sustained operation it will include organising additional crews, calling in other support people and allocating responsibilities. Additionally they make sure all communications systems are working, set up a system for handling messages, establish an incident control system, and make sure replacement supplies are available.

The Station Commander ideally has BF qualifications, has had some fireground experience, and has some communications experience. While the person initially responding should be a local resident, in any sustained operation we will need weekenders as well, since there will be time to drive up from Sydney. We will need several willing people who have been trained to act as Station Commanders since in an extended emergency we have to operate 24 hours a day and need to give people a break.

We will provide training where necessary to fill some of these gaps since we don't expect every person who might volunteer to have all these capabilities.

2. Comms Support Officer (Communications)



This person works with the Comms Officer to handle all the communications with Fire Control, the crews in the field and answers phones until other people are assigned. In a medical emergency, it includes meeting an ambulance and guiding it to the emergency location.

We need several people who can fill the Comms Support Officer position and will provide training and procedures to follow.

3. Community Liaison Officer



This person manages communication with the community directly and through the Area Coordinators. Responsibilities will vary depending on the extent of the operation but could include obtaining the latest status information from various sources, updating the telephone message on 4756 2040, provide updates to Area Coordinators, and suggest sources of information to people who are not on the mounts at the time.

We have already established this group of people and the system was used successfully in the bushfires of last November and December. If you have an interest in this role, then let us know.

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4. Catering Team

These people provide food to the crews both in the field and returning from an operation. This is particularly important in a sustained operation. We need several people who can work as a team to provide catering as well as people willing to pre-make meals or provide food when asked.



5. Equipment Support Officers

This position is based at the Fire Station. During and following each call out the Officer will check that the trucks have all equipment needed for the particular emergency, are refueled after each mission, make sure all equipment on trucks works and develop an annual maintenance plan so all equipment is repaired and ready for the fire season.

The Equipment Support Officer needs to have mechanical and maintenance experience. We are looking for several Equipment Support Officers whether local residents or weekenders.



6. Field Support Officer

This position provides support to the field by transporting people and supplies to the fireground, checking water supplies are available for local fire fighting, escorting convoys of earth moving equipment and water tankers, and organising fire lookouts to provide local information to the Station Commander.

The Field Support Officer will need at least BF qualifications, should have good local area knowledge, familiarity with fireground procedures, and ideally some comms experience

We welcome your interest in any of these roles. Please volunteer even if you are not certain of your experience or knowledge level. We will provide training on the procedures and skills needed.

To volunteer please contact me on peter_raines@hotmail.com - (or 0403 140 963) - or David Howell on howelldj@ozemail.com.au (or 4756 2091).

Peter Raines, Captain

Dates for the Diary

Sunday, April 1st, 9.00 am - 12.00 noon	Monthly Training	Mt Irvine Station for work on Mt Irvine trails
Sunday 15th April, 8.30 - 11.30am	Fire trail maintenance and Hazard Reduction preparation	Mt Wilson Station
Saturday, 5th May, 6.30pm	Pig and Horn	Mt Wilson Community Hall
Sunday, May 6th, 9.00 am - 12.00 noon	Joint training exercise with Bell and Mt Tomah in map reading and Radio communi- cations	Mt Wilson Station, Followed by BBQ lunch
Saturday 26th - Sunday 27th May	Blue Mountains Quest (formerly Easter Bunny)	To be announced
Saturday June 2nd 3.00pm (to be confirmed)	Mt Wilson /Mt Irvine AGM	Mt Irvine Community Hall
Sunday, June 3rd, 9.00 am - 12.00 noon	Monthly Training	Mt Wilson Station

CHANGE YOUR SMOKE ALARM BATTERIES

Everyone should have changed their smoke alarm batteries when they changed their clocks at the end of daylight saving (25 March 2007) to help prevent further deaths in house fires. In the past five years several people have died and a number have been injured in house fires attended by the Fire Services in the Blue Mountains and surrounding areas.

Smoke alarms provide the early warning rural residents need to survive fires that can rapidly engulf a home and its contents. Several fires attended by firefighters last year involved significant damage, injury and loss of life. Some of these may have been prevented if working smoke alarms detected smoke early and alerted people so they could escape.

A properly maintained smoke alarm could save a life by enabling you and your family to escape rather than succumbing to smoke,

Tips on smoke alarms:

- Install at least one smoke alarm on each level of your home
- Use only Australian Standard 3786 smoke alarms
- Replace batteries when daylight saving changes (25 March 2007)
- Test smoke alarms once a month
- Clean smoke alarms every six months – use a vacuum cleaner
- Get new alarms every 10 years or earlier if they need replacing.
- Ensure you have a home fire evacuation plan

Smoke alarms are inexpensive and became compulsory in all places of residence on 1 May 2006.

For more information on smoke alarms contact your local Fire Station, go to the RFS website, www.rfs.nsw.gov.au, or NSW Fire Brigades website, www.fire.nsw.gov.au.

This FireWise message is brought to you by the Community Safety Sub-Group of the Blue Mountains Bush Fire Management Committee.



Blackheath 21/11/2006



Bell 25/11/2006



Backburn 21/11/2006

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Comments, contributions and suggestions welcome!

Find us at <http://mtwilson.rfsa.org.au>