Concerted response as major incidents impact multiple regions

When the State faced three of nature’s most destructive hazards earlier this year the breadth of experience and expertise across our emergency services was demonstrated.

Over a three week period from 12 February, career and volunteer fire and emergency services personnel and staff, working in partnership with other agencies, rallied together with local communities to respond to a number of major incidents.

These included the Bridgetown, Greenbushes and Balingup bushfires in the Lower South West region, Severe Tropical Cyclone (TC) Rusty, and bushfires to the north east of Perth.

The spate of significant incidents began when thunderstorms sparked a series of bushfires in the Lower South West which threatened Bridgetown, Greenbushes and Balingup.

At the peak of the fires that extended for five days, more than 200 personnel worked collaboratively to extinguish them and make areas safe.

In the North West, Pilbara and Kimberley communities began preparing for a tropical low that was sitting off the Western Australia coast on Saturday 23 February. Within days, TC Rusty had developed into a Category 4 system and was bearing down on Port Hedland and Marble Bar.

With very destructive weather forecast, Pilbara communities including Port Hedland were on Red Alert for almost two months.

The cyclone eventually crossed near Paroo Station on 27 February, causing relatively minor damage. It was quickly followed by several days of flooding in the Pilbara’s De Grey River catchment.

Meanwhile further south, a large bushfire broke out and threatened homes in The Vines, shortly followed by another major blaze in Bullsbrook and the Avon Valley.

“DFES greatly values the knowledge, expertise and experience of all volunteers, career personnel and staff who responded to the bushfire, cyclone and flood incidents”, Commissioner Gregson said.

Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner Wayne Gregson said that responding to these incidents required a huge commitment of time and effort.

“DFES greatly values the knowledge, expertise and experience of all volunteers, career personnel and staff who responded to the bushfire, cyclone and flood incidents," Commissioner Gregson said.

“When faced with a string of critical emergencies like these, the community knows it can rely on all our personnel working together across the services, cooperating with other agencies, and doing their very best to protect life and property.”
Mammoth response saves homes as Avon Valley bush burns

A major fire suppression effort was launched when several bushfires were reported minutes apart between Middle Swan and Bullsbrook at the end of February.

Around noon on 28 February, firefighters were at the scene of a scrub fire on Oakover Road. While crews were unable to save an old rail carriage being used as a shed, they did stop the fire from impacting neighbouring properties.

The next arriving crew had to be diverted three kilometres north where another fire had broken out and was threatening homes near the main railway line to the Eastern States.

Meanwhile, more reports had been received of fires burning a further 20 kilometres north in the vicinity of the railway line, along the banks of the Avon River in Walyunga National Park.

The line was soon closed and trains halted, while the Avon Line train service between Perth and Northam was also halted, while the Avon Link train service between Perth and Northam was also cancelled.

The national park fires became one as they quickly spread out of the valley and a strong easterly wind pushed the resulting large blaze towards Bullsbrook, six kilometres away.

The emergency telephone warning system was used for people between Baskerville and Bullsbrook throughout the afternoon, and public information alerts were also issued and broadcast.

Residents were advised to leave while it was safe, and a relocation centre managed by the Department for Child Protection and Family Support (CPFS) in Bullsbrook remained open for the next two days.

Level 3 Incident Controller Superintendent Allan Riley said that because of the conditions and proximity of fire to homes, a bushfire Emergency Warning needed to remain in place for more than 24 hours.

"Although many people were affected by the fire, property damage was minimal," he said.

"It was encouraging to see some very well prepared rural properties bordering the Walyunga National Park.

"The bushfire warning area was large, due to the conditions and extent of the multiple fires covering 15 kilometres between Baskerville and Bullsbrook, and 10 kilometres between the Avon Valley and the Great Northern Highway."

The fire burnt 1,500 hectares of bushland in the first 24 hours. It also destroyed 1,000 hectares of national park vegetation, creating erosion and river sedimentation issues, and causing significant damage to the park’s camping and recreation facilities.

At the height of the incident on the first afternoon, five twin wing water bombers, along with two Type 3 and two Type 1 Helitacs and the Erickson Air crane, assisted crews battling to contain the fire in rugged, hilly countryside.

Helitacs also returned on the second and third days to assist firefighters with extinguishing flareups and hopovers.

Firefighters from regions as far away as Molyo Island and Geraldton conducted patrols and extinguished hotspots in the Avon Valley east of Shady Hills for the next three days.

Great Northern Highway was closed either side of Bullsbrook for almost two days due to risks to residents and firefighters from fire and smoke. This caused major disruption to road users, and in particular road trains. Local road closures also meant many residents were unable to return home until the area was declared safe on the third day.

Two schools and a kindergarten were also closed for a day due to the fire.

"A large number of resources from several agencies were committed to this incident," Allan said. "They were able to bring the situation under control relatively quickly, in very trying conditions."

"It was rewarding to see posters erected by residents reflecting their gratitude for the efforts of everyone who helped fight the fire."

City of Swan Community Emergency Services Manager Damien Pumphrey, the initial Incident Controller, praised residents of the Shady Hills area for their high level of bushfire preparation.

"The preparedness of properties in the urban interface highlighted the significant impact Bushfire Ready Groups can have."

Residents attended meetings held at the Bullsbrook Community Centre where representatives from DFES, CPFS, Police and City of Swan provided information.

The main questions being asked were about the status of the fire and how soon the roads would be opened to allow people to return to their homes.

A street meet near Shady Hills was also held to engage those residents who decided to actively defend their properties.

The DFES website received tens of thousands of hits, and the public information call centre at the Cockburn Emergency Services Complex also handled hundreds of calls from people seeking details and advice.

The cause of the fires remains under investigation by DFES Fire Investigation and Analysis Branch.
The communities of Bridgetown, Greenbushes and Balingup were confronted with the powerful force of summer bushfires for the third time in a decade, when a lightning storm sparked a string of fires through the area. Significant bushfires in the Blackwood Valley had previously threatened the townsites of Bridgetown and Greenbushes in 2003 and 2009.

On the afternoon of Tuesday 12 February, a number of thunderstorms formed along a surface trough, causing several ignitions over the south west of the State. In the area where the fires started it was hot and dry, with very low humidity.

DFES Incident Controller, Lower South West Superintendent John Tillman, said a total of 18 bushfires stretched across the region.

“The majority of bushfires were detected during the first afternoon, with lightning strikes causing more the next day,” John said.

“The blaze burnt on steep slopes through pine and blue gum plantations, and native remnant forest. Under the influence of north westerly winds, it threatened the townsite of Bridgetown.”

Firefighting efforts

At the peak of the incident, 200 firefighters from local volunteer Bush Fire Brigades, DFES, the Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPaW – formerly DEC) and the Forest Products Commission, were supported by six water bombers and two helicopters as they battled the fires into the evening of the third day.

John said that firefighters from all agencies worked extremely hard to contain the bushfires over the five days that they threatened local communities.

“All of the fires were managed under a multiagency structure, irrespective of tenure, to ensure an effective, efficient and coordinated response,” he said.

“The incredible efforts of firefighters during this period were pivotal in saving the communities of Bridgetown, Greenbushes and Balingup, as well as outlying areas, from the impact of a broad scale bushfire.”

The final bushfire damage tally included more than 4,000 hectares of plantation, native forest, farmland and pasture.

The heritage listed c1862 Southampton Homestead was destroyed, along with the Southampton Bridge, sheds, minor outbuildings and fencing. In addition, a number of livestock were lost or injured, and some grape vines affected. Power infrastructure and the Millstream to Bridgetown water line were also damaged.

John said the loss of the Southampton Homestead was extremely disappointing; however, information gathered at debriefs highlighted the tremendous effort crews expended trying to defend it.

“Local DPaW firefighter Jim Green from Nannup was crew leader on one of the appliances that endeavoured to save the homestead,” John said.

“At the incident debrief he stated how incredibly disheartened firefighters were that they had been unable to save this very important, local historic homestead.”

At the overall cooperation and coordination between the agencies in managing not only this incident, but all of the fires over the period, was impressive.

“The Incident Support Group in particular made a great contribution.”

Actions taken to protect the community included the closure of the Greenbushes Primary School, and evacuation of the Greenbushes mine site and Maranup caravan park. As a precaution a plan was developed and resources mobilised for evacuation of the Greenbushes townsites, if required.

CLU gets involved

Community briefings were held in Bridgetown and Greenbushes on 13 February, with around 350 people attending the Bridgetown Recreation Centre and more than 100 at Greenbushes. Further briefings also took place over following days at Bridgetown, Greenbushes and Balingup.

Community Engagement Coordinator Heather McNamara said the DFES Community Liaison Unit (CLU) was activated to provide the community with up to date incident information.

“Accurate maps were provided for each location and placed on display in Bridgetown, Greenbushes and Balingup,” Heather said.

“Staff were available at both Greenbushes and Balingup to provide reassurance to residents and answer their questions.”

After the fire

A community event was coordinated in Greenbushes in March by newly appointed Community Engagement Officer Stephanie Green as a get together for community members and firefighters.

Stephanie said around 100 people attended and it was an opportunity to gain feedback about the incident responses.

“The event was well received, and the public were very willing to talk about their experiences during the incident,” Stephanie said.

“This will help emergency service agencies continue to improve systems and procedures for warning the community in any future incidents.

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Blackwood Valley on bushfire alert

The Blackwood River Valley had previously threatened the townsites of Bridgetown and Greenbushes in 2003 and 2009.

“Two fires were reported, one which threatened the townsite of Bridgetown, and the other which threatened the townsite of Greenbushes,” John said.

“Accurate maps were provided for each location and placed on display in Bridgetown, Greenbushes and Balingup,” Heather said.

“Staff were available at both Greenbushes and Balingup to provide reassurance to residents and answer their questions.”
Tropical Cyclone Rusty briefly makes Cat 4

The imminent effect of Tropical Cyclone Rusty caused a significant disruption to shipping and offshore industries, with Port Hedland and Dampier ports being closed for an extended period, as well as onshore mining operations near the cyclone’s path.

A tropical low that started in waters off North West WA on 22 February became near stationary before continuing to intensify and move slowly in a south to south easterly direction towards the east Pilbara coast.

The system was classified as a severe tropical cyclone on 25 February. Due to its anticipated severity, an Emergency Declaration was made from 5pm that day for the Shire of Broome and five Pilbara Shires.

Although reaching category 4 level for several hours, Severe Tropical Cyclone Rusty eventually crossed the coast as a category 3 system early in the morning of Wednesday 27 February, about 10 kilometres east of Pardoo Station.

The Bureau of Meteorology said that wind gusts reached around 200 kilometres per hour as the cyclone made landfall before heading east of Marble Bar, Nullagine and Newman.

DFES issued an All Clear around noon on 28 February as it fell below tropical cyclone intensity. Remnants of the cyclone caused heavy rainfall, resulting in major flooding in Pilbara catchment areas.

Tropical Cyclone Rusty briefly makes Cat 4

Communities between Pardoo and Nullagine remained on red alert with people advised to stay indoors, and residents of towns between Nullagine and Newman were told to prepare for cyclonic weather.

In Port Hedland there was only minor damage, even though the Airport recorded prolonged gale force winds of up to 119 kilometres per hour for 39 hours from midnight between 25 and 27 February.

All flights to and from Port Hedland and Karratha airports were cancelled for a time, and roads in and out of Port Hedland were closed. Qantas also stopped flights out of Paraburdoo from 8am on 27 February.

The closure of Great Northern Highway meant freight trucks were banked up at Port Hedland, leading to empty shelves at some supermarkets in Broome and Derby.

RES at the ready

DFES established incident management teams to help people impacted by the cyclone, and State Emergency Service (SES) units in all Pilbara towns were activated between 23 February and 2 March.

SES volunteers and Volunteer Emergency Service (VES) members undertook damage assessments and helped in the clean up of Port Hedland townsite. They responded to 17 requests for assistance, mainly involving chainsaw work and removal of debris.

Members of the Urban Search and Rescue Taskforce from Perth also provided support.

The evacuation of the potential storm surge area in low lying parts of Port Hedland was successfully undertaken in a short timeframe as a joint effort between SES, WA Police and the Army. Volunteers conducted door knocks to advise residents to relocate as a precaution, and around 110 people left.

DFES personnel and SES volunteers liaised with remote Indigenous communities in the Pilbara to check on their welfare.

Allison Sadler. 24seven Issue 2, 2013

Assisted by WA Police, 50 people from Yandeyarra were relocated to South Hedland, with some remaining in place to monitor river levels.

While SES community members from Warrabub Fox were relocated to an evacuation centre in Marble Bar, 12 people from the Goodelia community and 11 elderly people and children from Irungadj were taken to Newman.

SES volunteers also organised a food resupply for Marble Bar.

Reconnaissance helicopters were deployed by DFES to survey damage across the region and following assessments of remote Indigenous communities, residents were cleared to return.

A large bushfire at The Vines in Upper Swan saw many residents opt to stay and actively defend their homes against ember attack.

The blaze that had started on Great Northern Highway near Apple Street, escalated to Emergency Warning level within a couple of hours. Pushed by gusty westerly winds, it soon spread out of control.

Residents returning home from work were held back at road blocks, hoping their pets and property were safe, as they watched the fire approaching.

Eighth career and volunteer firefighters, supported by Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPaW – formerly DEC) crews, worked tirelessly to defend property and stay on top of the rapidly growing fire that was threatening houses in the north eastern part of The Vines along Roxburghie Drive.

Concerned residents pitched in to assist the fire effort by putting out spot fires around their homes with shovels and garden hoses.

Overhead, four Helitacs and a Type 1 Helicopter provided aerial support, while on ground level a front end loader and two dozer operators used heavy machinery to construct containment lines around the perimeter.

North East Metropolitan Superintendent Allan Riley, who was Incident Controller at the height of the blaze, said the fire strategy had a three pronged attack.

“We employed a combination of direct and indirect machinery breaks to contain the fire, along with a direct hand line attack on the flanks,” he said.

“In addition, residential asset protection was implemented at streets adjacent to the southern flanks of the fire.

“One of the significant challenges for crews was trying to access the flanks of the fire due to an untreated, privately constructed bridge across Ellen Brook, and road barricades erected by developers on Damalling Drive.”

Allan praised the efforts of first arriving Ellenbrook Station Officer Antony Sadler.

Residents who chose to relocate were able to go to Atlee Recreation Centre, but by late afternoon the threat had eased and they were allowed to return to their homes.

People were still asked to remain vigilant as the possibility of a change in wind direction overnight was uncertain.

A total of 150 hectares of bushland was burnt during the blaze, and the cause of the fire was most likely a spark from the exhaust of a passing truck on Great Northern Highway.

“Antony did a great job under trying circumstances in the initial stages of the fire, as did attending District Officers and Community Emergency Service Managers,” he said.

“Communications, including the WAERN network, worked well and firefighting teams were effectively briefed early about their assigned sectors and command channels.

“Asset protection strategies contributed to firefighters successfully saving 30 homes as well as a sanctuary that protects the Western Swamp Tortoise in Ellen Brook Nature Reserve east of The Vines.”

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Fisherman’s plight requires multiagency response

One Saturday evening in May a man departed Mandurah and set out on a lone fishing trip.

His family knew he intended to return home in the early hours of the following day, and when he failed to appear, his wife reported him missing at 7.20am.

The man’s car and trailer were located at a local boat ramp, but only a vague description of the vessel was known.

A ground crew checked the local marina jetties, and a Department of Transport (DOT) vessel at Port Bouvard Marina also searched to see if he was there.

Mandurah Water Rescue Group was requested by the Water Police to undertake a search, and at 8.43am two vessels, Spirit of Mandurah and RubyA2, were launched in slightly rough seas but with good visibility.

At 8.50am a friend of the fisherman suggested a possible position for him on the ocean. Armed with this information, a targeted search then commenced.

Mandurah Group Commander Barry Walton said the fisherman was one nautical mile away at the time and from a distance could make out the rescue boats looking for him.

“He was unable to attract their attention, however, because his 5.5 metre vessel had overturned and the Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) was below water,” Barry said.

“Water Police and DOT had also joined in the sea search by 10.30am.

“It was when the rescue boats approached for a second time that the man, who was clinging to his upturned vessel, realised he was actually outside the search area.

“The seas had been rough overnight and into the next morning, and it was not safe for him to enter the water.

“Already cold and wet, he decided to do so around 10.30am when conditions on the ocean had calmed down a bit. Diving down under the capsized boat, he located and then activated his EPIRB.

“At about 11am Water Police received a message from the Australian Maritime Safety Authority based in Canberra that an EPIRB signal had been detected.”

Barry said this was when the Mandurah rescue boats headed for the updated position, with Water Police arriving first to find the man clinging to his partially floating boat.

“RubyA2 towed the stricken vessel back to Mandurah at about three knots, which took four to five hours,” Barry said.

“Meanwhile, Water Police recovered the casualty who was eventually placed in a waiting ambulance back on shore.

“Emergency services spent four hours locating the fisherman, and the rescue could have taken significantly less time had he taken some prudent safety steps and logged in before setting out to sea.

“Although the Group’s radio station was unmanned at the time the fisherman left, coast radios do keep a listening watch.”

Barry added that in all probability this misadventure would have turned out differently had the fisherman taken the simple precaution of ensuring his family knew where he intended to fish.

“It is recommended that boating safety equipment is placed close at hand and not locked away or stowed under or behind other equipment,” Barry said.

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“It is recommended that boating safety equipment is placed close at hand and not locked away or stowed under or behind other equipment,” Barry said.

“Also, it is advisable for people to ensure family members are aware of details about their boat. On this occasion the man’s wife did not know the type, approximate length or colour of the vessel.”

Crews control fire at steel factory

When firefighters attended an incident at a Kewdale steel factory in early March, they were confronted with a blaze that had erupted in a pile of 200 recycled car bodies.

Flames were shooting skywards and plumes of smoke could be seen coming from the smoking steel.

A/Superintendent Peter Jones, who was the Incident Controller, said crews got on top of the fire quickly.

“Fifty firefighters from eight stations had the industrial fire contained and under control swiftly, despite battling flames up to 15 metres high at one point,” Peter said.

“We were assisted in the early stages of the fire by Perth Airport’s Aviation Rescue and Firefighting who provided crews and appliances to help to contain the blaze.

“One of their main concerns was smoke drifting over surrounding suburbs including Wattle Grove, the Sheffield Park Estate and the industrial area south west of Welshpool.”

DFES issued community warnings asking people to stay inside their homes with windows and doors shut, and drivers were urged to avoid the area.

The Pollution Response Unit, now part of the Department of Environment Regulation, was brought in to conduct air monitoring.

Their testing revealed that pollutants were not at high levels and the smoke was not toxic.
Storm season rolls in

First storms arrive in May

The rain arrived with a vengeance in the second week of May, with several cold fronts and a deep low affecting the metropolitan region and south west parts of the State.

Thunderstorms and strong, gusty winds accompanied 50-80 millimetres of rain in most Perth areas, while in Busselton rainfall totals on 8 May exceeded 100 millimetres and winds reached 100 kilometres per hour.

Metropolitan Chief Superintendent Gary Kennedy said State Emergency Service (SES) volunteers responded to more than 140 calls for assistance over the four day period.

“Areas most affected included Stirling and Wanneroo in the northern suburbs, and Cockburn in the south,” Gary said.

“Commonly reported damage was water entering properties through poorly maintained roofs, overflowing gutters and drains, and trees or vegetation blown over.

“SES volunteers responded to requests for assistance from residents by covering roofs with tarpaulins, propping up collapsed ceilings and removing downed trees.”

NW record rainfall in June

While rain to the south of the State was short lived, unseasonal downpours occurred in the North West.

In early June, Broome’s dry season was interrupted by a weak tropical low drifting close to the west Kimberley coast. This system brought with it heavy falls, with the wettest June day in the town since recording began.

Not to be outdone, the Pilbara also experienced some wet weather of its own, with exceptionally heavy rainfall towards the end of the month.

Flood warnings were issued for the Dampier Grey River, Fortescue River and Ashburton River catchments with water levels rising rapidly.

Several roads in the region were closed and while the SES was on standby, volunteers were not required to assist any members of the community.

The central and eastern parts of the Pilbara and west Kimberley recorded their wettest June on record, with monthly totals over 200 millimetres reported.

While the SES was on standby, volunteers were not required to assist any members of the community.

More storm activity in July

A deep low pressure system off the eastern south coast moved steadily into the Great Australian Bight on 16 July, causing damage to homes in metropolitan Perth and southern parts of the State.

More than 150 SES volunteers from 17 metropolitan and four regional units worked through the night to help the community recover from the dangerous weather. Career Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) and volunteer Bush Fire Service firefighters were also involved in helping with the clean up.

In suburban Perth the bulk of requests for assistance were for damage to roof structures or trees brought down as a result of wind impact. Other examples of reported damage were for shattered glass, fallen trees on cars and fences, and minor flash flooding.

In the South West region SES units attended 11 requests for assistance. Lower South West SES units responded to a total of 14 call outs across the region, all of which were of a minor nature involving loose roof tiles and minor flooding.

In the Shire of Augusta-Margaret River the weather caused power outages and there was also some localised flooding which resulted in damage to culverts and a bridge. SES volunteers in Albany, Denmark and Esperance received a small number of requests for assistance, mainly involving minor wind damage to properties and removal of tree debris.

Further storms occurred between 25-27 July, after dangerous weather again impacted parts of the Perth metropolitan area and the South West.

SES volunteers, supported by career FRS firefighters, responded to a total of 53 requests for assistance across the State, 44 of which were in the metropolitan area.

SES South Coastal District Officer Wil Blackshaw said 110 SES volunteers from 14 metropolitan units were active overnight on Friday 26 July and into Saturday morning.

“The majority of damage in suburban Perth occurred in Heathridge, Beldon, Halls Head and Silver Sands,” he said.

“The call outs attended by SES volunteers mainly involved damage to roof structures due to wind and rain, and there was also some flash flooding.

“The most significant damage occurred when a patio was lifted off a house in Heathridge by a wind gust, a ceiling collapsed in Swan View and a chimney blew over in Como.

“Again SES volunteers worked quickly and efficiently to restore order for people whose homes were affected by the bad weather.”

Requests for assistance in regional areas included Kalgoorlie, Moora and York, while in Collie SES volunteers helped the local government to pump water from a dam to prevent flooding.

Fire halted on board luxury boat

Firefighters swiftly quelled a fire that broke out on the 49 metre True North cruiser vessel when it was moored off Munster in early March.

The early evening blaze was fought by local Fire and Rescue Service crews from Fremantle, Hope Valley, Murdoch and Success, who were called to the incident after a report of fire on the third level.

Beeliar District Officer Peter Norman said that passengers and crew were safely evacuated, with the exception of the ship’s engineer, who remained on board to assist the firefighting effort by working the ship’s pumps.

“Minutes after arrival, two firefighters in breathing apparatus were tasked to carry out a direct attack on the fire utilising True North’s internal hose system,” Peter said.

“Despite their efforts the fire escalated, and they were soon joined by another pair of firefighters. Together they managed to quickly contain the blaze inside a bow head.

“At this point, fire crews left the vessel after being advised there was gas fuelled explosive detonators on board. They were stored in a gun cabinet and regularly used to launch anchors and guidelines.

“Crews continued dampering down and cooling from a safe distance, and the fire was declared fully extinguished within an hour of the first firefighters arriving at the scene.”

Salvage and overhaul operations were then commenced to remove debris and plastic material. Water used to put the fire out was also recovered, with none having entered the ocean.

DFES Fire Investigation and Analysis Unit District Officer Gary Baxter attended the scene and determined that the cause of the $100,000 fire was radiant heat from a fluorescent light in the bow.

“Items including life jackets, scuba diving gear and floaties, were packed up close to the light which was switched on,” Gary said.

“The heat eventually built up and ignited the gear, starting the blaze.”

Improved storage, better housekeeping and placing a guard around the light were recommended to the ship’s operators.”
RAC teamed up with the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES), Royal Perth Hospital, St John Ambulance and WA Police, to present a comprehensive program encouraging students to look after themselves and their mates on the road.

The multifaceted presentation at Perth Arena included a re-enactment of a crash scene that showed how each of the emergency services would respond in real life.

USAR Manager District Officer Rick Curtis said firefighters attending road crashes hear, see and feel the associated trauma and devastating impact that these often preventable incidents have.

“Firefighters work closely with other emergency services at the scene of road crashes to assist injured or trapped people and their loved ones, and that collaboration continues through important initiatives such as bstreetsmart,” Rick said.

“Education and awareness is vitally important if we are to lessen the road toll, particularly in the younger age group.”

The scenario was based on an actual incident that occurred in Mandurah last year. Students were shown footage of the injuries sustained by the casualties, including compound fractures as well as shots of the mortar where the deceased was taken.

Each segment was narrated, with the main presenter being Dr Sudhakar Rao of Royal Perth Hospital Trauma Unit. He was supported by each of the emergency responders who also took part in a panel question and answer session.

A line that rang alarm bells for many of the students was spoken by Dr Rao, who asked the students to look to their left and right, and then around the room. He said it was worth considering that next year some of those people would no longer be here, having lost their lives in a road crash.

One of the most moving parts of the event was hearing directly from people who have been involved in road trauma.

Among the speakers who told personal stories was Des Smoker, father of teenager Adrian, who lost his life due to a drink driving accident.

“Giving students the opportunity to hear direct from first responders, including firefighters, also brought home in a very real and dramatic way the critical importance of safety on the roads.”

bstreetsmart also included a safe driving demonstration and a series of informative and interactive exhibits set up for students to browse through.

The general reaction by emergency services representatives and students after the event was that bstreetsmart had been a success, one they felt would make a difference to young people’s behaviour in the future.

bstreetsmart was originally developed by the Trauma Service at Westmead Hospital in New South Wales and launched in 2006. The program has received national recognition through the Australian Road Safety Awards. This is the second year bstreetsmart has been held in Western Australia.

For more information visit rac.com.au/bstreetsmart

In the lead up to the Easter break the annual RoadWise campaign highlighted road safety awareness to the community. Local governments across the State joined forces with road safety partners and emergency services personnel at a formal ceremony to bless the roads.

Fire and Rescue Service Station Officer Chris Sharrman from Perth Fire Station played a role in the event, and along with WA Police and St John Ambulance representatives, related some personal thoughts on what it is like for a firefighter who is regularly called to car, truck and motorcycle crashes on our roads.

Emergency responders tend to be regarded as special, highly trained officers who are able to put the trauma of what they face at incidents on hold as they battle to protect people and save lives.

At a party recently my wife was asked the usual question when someone finds out I am a firefighter: does she worry about me at work?

I am sure the strong, valuable and emotive messages that were presented at bstreetsmart resonated with the young audience,” Commissioner Gregson said.

“In 2012, the number of road fatalities for 17-24 year olds was almost double that of their proportion in the population, and events such as this are an excellent way to educate this key group.

“Giving students the opportunity to hear direct from first responders, including firefighters, also brought home in a very real and dramatic way the critical importance of safety on the roads.”

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Honouring the bravery, service and sacrifice of firefighters, it is an enduring tribute to those who have passed away while serving the community.

DFES held its first memorial service at this special site in May to celebrate International Firefighters’ Day and acknowledge Western Australian career and volunteer firefighters who work so hard to protect the community.

Following the solemn sound of a lone bagpiper, Emergency Services Minister Joe Francis addressed the gathering.

“This occasion highlights the fact that firefighters are motivated by the desire to keep their communities safe, despite the inherent risks they can face when turning out to emergencies,” Mr Francis said.

“It is fitting that we gather to celebrate the memory of those who have given their lives in the line of duty.

“While doing this we also acknowledge the families of firefighters who wait at home for loved ones to return at the end of their shift. Those who have endured loss are particularly in our thoughts today.”

Standing before an honour guard of firefighters and flag bearers, Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner Wayne Gregson said the service, which will become an annual event, was an appropriate way to recognise the dedication of firefighters, particularly those who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

“We are here to show our respect for all those men and women who have put on a firefighter’s uniform and served their community,” Commissioner Gregson said.

“There is no doubt that pursuing this distinguished career, or committing to volunteer for this noble cause, risks the ultimate sacrifice and we acknowledge the contribution of those who have passed.

“We are here to show our respect for all those men and women who have put on a firefighter’s uniform and served their community.”

“IT is also important to remember that there are many others who have suffered serious personal injury through their pursuit of protecting the public from harm.

“To these personnel, many of whom may still be suffering, please accept my thanks for your service.”

Chaplain Ron Wingate delivered a memorial reading and blessed a series of firefighting symbols before reciting the Firefighters’ Prayer.

As a soft breeze wafted over the Grove, Senior Firefighter Morton Bore, Volunteer Fire and Rescue Services Association Executive Officer Max Osborn and Bush Fire Service representative John Mangini, read out the names of fallen firefighters, punctuated by the ringing of a brass bell.

A final show of respect saw floral tributes placed on the memorial before formal proceedings came to a close with the sounding of the siren from a vintage firefighting appliance and a minute’s silence.

As some sought quiet contemplation, the rain that had threatened all morning began to fall.

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Stamping out workplace bullying

Aside from the often debilitating personal impact of bullying, workplace bullying is estimated as costing the economy up to $36 billion each year, with some research reporting that one in three workers have been subjected to it.

DFES considers bullying in the workplace a serious safety concern and is currently conducting a four-month ‘stamp out bullying’ campaign to:

- increase understanding and awareness of what constitutes bullying
- strengthen organisational and individual accountabilities for workplace behaviour
- demonstrate a no tolerance stance on bullying by taking allegations seriously

Bullying is defined as repeated, unreasonable or inappropriate behaviour directed toward a worker or group of workers that creates a risk to health and safety.

It is covered under the Occupational Health and Safety Act 1984 as it is considered a workplace hazard.

Human Resources Director Karen Roberts said bullying can have a profound effect on a person’s physical and mental health, and impact on their professional and personal life.

“Bullying remains a major challenge in the modern workplace and DFES has a duty of care to ensure our employees and volunteers recognise it as a safety issue,” Karen said.

“DFES is committed to giving our people the tools and support mechanisms to ensure it is dealt with in a constructive way.

“The anti-bullying campaign has been developed by the Department because many people would not recognise that their behaviours affect those they work with.

“Through this campaign we are hoping that participants gain insight into what behaviours do and do not constitute bullying, why it is a safety concern, how bullying affects others, and what can be done about it.

“There are a range of existing and new initiatives that we encourage employees and volunteers to use to resolve their bullying concerns.”

Examples of bullying include:

- Abusive insulting or offensive language, including swearing.
- Behaviour or language that frightens, humilates, belittles or degrades, including criticism that is delivered with yelling and screaming.
- Inappropriate comments about a person’s appearance, lifestyle or their family.
- Teasing or regularly making someone the butt of pranks or practical jokes.
- Interfering with a person’s personal effects or work equipment.
- Harmful or offensive initiation practices.
- Isolation of workers.

Examples of what does not constitute bullying include:

- Managing people performance issues in a constructive manner.
- A manager directing and controlling how work is undertaken.
- The campaign aims to inform each employee and volunteer of their rights and responsibilities to ensure that DFES is a workplace free from bullying, intimidation and inappropriate behaviours.
- The campaign includes:
  - Lunch box information sessions at the Emergency Services Complex in Cockburn.
  - Resources available through the Intranet/Extranet including promotional posters, guidance notes, codes of practice, policy update, reports and self-assessments.
  - Regional presentations, as well as the promotion of resolution based initiatives such as mediation and counselling.
  - Training opportunities to improve personal skills, knowledge and self-awareness.

If you have any questions about the campaign or concerns about bullying in the workplace, please contact Grievance Coordinator Gabrielle Bird on 9395 9312 or gabrielle.bird@dfes.wa.gov.au

You can access free counselling and support services if you are suffering from bullying at work via the DFES Employee Assistance Program (EAP) at:

- People Sense: 1300 307 912 www.peoplesense.com.au

Orange colour of week for raising storm awareness

It read almost like a script when the Bureau of Meteorology forecast a strong cold front approaching the west coast just four days before the May launch of the 2013 storm season.

A second system was also due to hit the south west corner of the State a day later, with forecast widespread damaging winds of the kind only seen once or twice a year.

While the wild weather did not quite meet its potential ferocity, thunderstorms brought higher than average rainfall across the metropolitan area.

The State Emergency Service (SES) responded to more than 40 calls for assistance with damage reported across the Perth metropolitan area and South West.

Thousands of homeowners were also left without power statewide as crews tended to various network disruptions.

The storms proved a timely reminder for people to get outside and carry out any home maintenance before the peak of the season.

The official launch of Storm Awareness Week was held on 11 May at the relocated Cockburn Emergency Services Facility, with Emergency Services Minister Joe Francis reminding people across Perth and the State’s South West to prepare their homes, families and businesses for more storms throughout the season.

“Last year SES volunteers contributed more than 16,000 hours of their own time to help the WA community, and attended a total of 2,329 call outs.” Mr Francis said.

While the majority of requests related to water inundation and minor roof damage, crews also assisted homeowners following two ceiling collapses as well as reports of a large pine tree which had fallen on a car.

“Last year SES volunteers contributed more than 16,000 hours of their own time to help the WA community, and attended a total of 2,329 call outs.” Mr Francis said.

To watch the video DFES Storm Safety visit:  

DFESWesternAustralia
MOU reaffirms international partnership

The cooperative and mutually beneficial alliance between the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) and the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) was recently enshrined in a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

It was the first MOU to be formalised between the two parties since the transition of DFES to a government department, and runs to 2016 with an option for a further three years.

Signing on the dotted line at the Force’s Singapore headquarters recently were SCDF Commissioner Eric Yap and Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner Wayne Gregson.

“The MOU creates opportunities for joint initiatives and bilateral cooperation that will improve the delivery of firefighting and emergency services for both parties,” Commissioner Gregson said.

“It encompasses several key areas, including sharing of ideas and expertise, and includes the attachment of officers for professional training and collaborative projects.

“This two way exchange has proven of great value to date and will continue into the future.

“Another key agreement is the development of support capability for professional training and collaborative projects.

“On behalf of DFES, Commissioner Gregson received a statue from SCDF. It depicts a firefighter rescuing a small child.”

Firefighters get behind smoke alarm message

The annual smoke alarm campaign promoted by DFES is now into its twelfth year in Western Australia and was again well supported by firefighters across the State.

A point of difference in 2013 was the release of a new instructional video for the DFES website that focuses on how people can test, maintain and replace smoke alarms.

The video featured Daglish Fire and Rescue Service Station Officer Russell Jones and the key message ‘Don’t delay, check and maintain your smoke alarm today!’

“At a firefighter I know first hand how vital smoke alarms are, and was pleased to be able to contribute to this campaign initiative,” he said.

“The aim, which I think comes across clearly, is that checking and maintaining an alarm is easy and can be lifesaving.”

Perth District Officer Jon Broomhall said it was traditional for Perth Fire Station firefighters to join forces with Royal Perth Hospital (RPH) medical staff at campaign time each year.

“Our firefighters are on hand to chat to people about how essential smoke alarms are, while RPH nurses address the matter of burns safety,” Jon said.

“On this occasion, Dr Fiona Wood, Director of the RPH Burns Unit, dropped in to show her support for the promotion.

“When people stopped to look at the display we showed them how to test and keep smoke alarms in good working order, and held a free raffle with the prize of a smoke alarm and fire blanket.”

Volunteers from the regions also got involved in promoting the safety campaign locally, with Eaton-Australind Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service (VFRS) making an appearance at the local Foreshore Festival to spread the word about the importance of installing and maintaining smoke alarms.

The Augusta VFRS participates in the campaign each year, and again took time to assist elderly members of the Leeuwin Frail Aged Lodge and surrounding aged care facilities.

They replaced smoke alarm batteries and demonstrated how to clean and test the devices.

The winter Home Fire Safety campaign also promoted the value of smoke alarms and the need to replace them every 10 years, regardless of power supply.

This year’s flash poll indicated that 91 percent of respondents had a smoke alarm and of that number, 46 percent were mains powered.

“This was a good opportunity to show people how fast a fire can take hold and destroy a property,” he said.

Fire investigation tour kicks off winter safety campaign

Perth’s media were guided through the charred, smoke damaged interior of a Bibra Lake house recently to demonstrate the need for people to be vigilant this winter, particularly when it comes to home heating.

The tour, which was conducted by Fire Investigation Officers, launched the winter Home Fire Safety campaign.

Fire Investigation and Analysis Unit Manager Gary Baxter took the opportunity to reveal to reporters some of the key signs they look for when investigating a blaze.

“The house featured some typical indicators such as broken glass, melted aluminium window frames, and separation of plaster from the walls, and clearly demonstrated how radiant heat can start separate fires in the house.”

A new video is now on YouTube and the DFES website with Fire Investigation Officer Rob Lake explaining how the fire started and spread through the burnt home.

“There are some areas that reinforce the ‘get down low’ message, where you can see heat and smoke damage at mid-levels, and limited damage on the lower third portion of the walls,” Rob said.

Last winter in WA there were 172 accidental structure fires that caused $5.4million in property damage. One fatality resulted from these blazes and 13 people were injured.
**GENERAL NEWS**

**Conference focus on collaborative future of emergency services**

The WA Fire and Emergency Services Conference has become an increasingly popular fixture on the DFES calendar. It is a unique opportunity for volunteers from all over Western Australia to increase their knowledge and importantly, interact and network with their fellow fire and emergency services personnel.

This year members from all services will gather at the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre on Saturday 21 and Sunday 22 September for the third annual conference. The theme, A collaborative future: the changing face of emergency services, will provide a host of relevant and thought provoking discussion topics.

DFES has partnered with all Volunteer Associations to develop the comprehensive program, ensuring there will be something of interest to everyone.

Day one offers a variety of streamed sessions specifically tailored to the needs of each respective service, while day two is for all services. Key sessions will update delegates across a range of areas and provide a valuable insight into the latest developments in emergency management.

A highlight of this year’s program will be keynote speaker Australia’s Chief Climate Commissioner Professor Tim Flannery, whose address will align with the significant reforms being undertaken within DFES that focus on adapting to the changing needs of the community and environment.

One of the key outcomes of the reform agenda is to improve interoperability and cooperation between emergency services organisations. Central to achieving this is a shared understanding across the emergency services sector of the key challenges, trends and issues that will affect emergency management into the future.

Professor Flannery will explain the influence of climate change on extreme weather events over the next decade, and what this means for fire and emergency services.

Another conference highlight will be practical demonstrations designed to showcase the latest operational techniques and equipment for a car versus house incident, and a vertical rescue. Inter-service cooperation during emergencies will also be a key focal point.

State Emergency Service Volunteers Association President David Price said the conference provides a unique opportunity for volunteers from across the State to participate in a shared learning environment.

“For representatives from all services to get together to learn, share experiences and strengthen the special bonds that exist between emergency personnel, is invaluable,” David said.

“The event is of immense benefit to attending volunteers and their brigade, group or unit, as well as the wider community.”

Also planned are an emergency services appliance display and series of exhibitor booths.

On the social side, there is a Sundowner on Friday evening, with the annual Service Awards presentations scheduled for early morning, late afternoon and evening on opening day.

Emergency Services Minister Joe Francis will close the conference on Sunday with an afternoon tea for volunteers and family members who wish to attend.

“The event is of immense benefit to attending volunteers and their brigade, group or unit, as well as the wider community.”

A new online bushfire education program aligned to the national science curriculum will help primary school children learn about bushfires and the dangers they pose.

**Innovative online program to educate kids about bushfire**

The Bushfire Patrol program is directed at teachers and includes an online game, five lesson plans and activities for early childhood, middle and upper primary school students.

Director Community Engagement – Hazard Planning Suellen Flint said the program has been carefully crafted to support school curriculum outcomes, as well as key DFES bushfire messages and information.

“The initiative focuses on preparedness and includes a series of bushfire awareness messages and activities. Students will learn about fire weather conditions, bushfire behaviour, protection and information.”

Bushfire Patrol provides teachers with an interactive way of helping students learn about fire weather conditions, bushfire behaviour, protection and warnings.

“By absorbing knowledge about this important topic at a young age, children can develop a higher level of understanding around bushfire that may remain with them through their lives. As adults they may then respond more favourably to community bushfire safety information and warnings.”

Bushfire Patrol program funding has been jointly provided through DFES and the Federal Attorney General’s Natural Disaster Resilience Program.

Bushfire Patrol is part of a comprehensive DFES education package that includes other natural hazards like tropical cyclone and flood, both of which are aimed at upper primary school teachers.

**You can access Bushfire Patrol via the following link on the DFES webpage www.dfes.wa.gov.au/bushfirepatrol**

A new online bushfire education program aligned to the national science curriculum will help primary school children learn about bushfires and the dangers they pose.
Stage one of the legislation review’s preliminary information gathering has concluded, with more than 1,300 people consulted.

The review, which commenced in November 2012, will ensure that legislation governing fire and emergency services is up to date and working as effectively as possible.

DFES sought the opinions of local government, volunteers, volunteer associations, and other stakeholders on the current legislation, and received 219 submissions.

Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner Wayne Gregson said he was impressed with the strong response that had been received in the first stage of the process.

Incident reports made easy

It will soon be easier and simpler to provide fire related incident reports to DFES using a new set of hard copy incident report forms specifically designed with Bush Fire Brigades and Volunteer Emergency Service units in mind.

“With new Occupational Safety and Health regulations on the horizon, it is important that there is an accurate record not only about the incident itself, but also who attended, what role they played and when.”

The Operational Information Systems branch at DFES has spent a number of months developing a new set of forms in consultation with Bush Fire Brigades, Volunteer Emergency Service units, Volunteer Associations, Local Government, Community Emergency Services Managers and DFES staff, all of whom entered the data received on these forms.

Manager Operational Information Systems Jared Ebrall said that consultation identified the need for any new forms to have clear, easily understood questions and collect only essential information.

“Stage two has now commenced, with 11 expert working groups formed to analyse and review the information received to date. Detailed research and meetings with key stakeholder groups are taking place over coming months to identify viable and logical options relevant to the issues raised during the first consultation stage.

This process will result in the development of a Draft Concept Paper addressing various ways that future challenges and opportunities can be met. After consultation is complete, the paper will be made available for public comment.”

Some of the topics of interest have included the Emergency Services Levy, management of volunteer brigades and units, and administration of career firefighters.

In addition, they should be in pad form with triplicate copies, plus be easy to locate and store on appliances.

“WA bushfire regulations stipulate that local governments must report all of their incidents to DFES each year,” Jared said.

“In practice this does not always occur, perhaps partly due to confusion as to the reporting format. We have acted to ensure that the process is quick and simple for volunteers, and are committed to supporting them in their important roles.

“To determine the best way to meet the need, 26 different paper forms were scrutinised. The final result of the process is a set of four new forms that identify the critical information required for FIRS.”

“They are provided in folders that allow three copies of each incident report to be created, one to be sent to DFES, with the other two copies kept locally.”

An initial set of pads has been sent out to all local governments, while additional sets of pads and folders will be available for order through DFES.

Helping hand brings people together during bushfire

An elderly Bullsbrook resident, who found herself stranded during the large Walyunga National Park blaze at the end of February, received an unexpected offer of assistance.

It was early evening and Ms Ita Cronin was in Ellenbrook, unable to get back home because of roadblocks put in place for safety reasons.

“Jenny, my 96 year old mother, had no family or friends close by, and it was getting dark.”

Ms Cronin explained the situation and enquired whether Mrs Taplin could collect Ms Cronin from returning home, so she went with Jenny on the school run, had lunch with her and her parents, went to swimming training after school with Connor, and stayed for an evening meal with the family.

Allan Riley took the opportunity to present Mrs Taplin with a DFES Certificate of Appreciation recognising the efforts of the family.

“Allen expressed his gratitude for the generosity, compassion and admirable sense of community spirit displayed by Jenny is a fine example of this.”

Ms Cronin took advantage of the reunion to give a gift and flowers to Jenny, saying that she feels like part of the family now.

In turn Jenny said she was happy to have been of assistance, and explained that coincidentally her own home was threatened by a large bushfire just a week later.

“It is major events like these that highlight how people are able to rely on each other in times of need,” Allan said.

“The goodwill shown by the Taplin family to a member of the community who found herself in difficult circumstances, is to be commended. Ms Cronin was able to feel safe and calm during a significant bushfire emergency because of their efforts.”

“We all have a part to play in how we respond and recover from bushfire because it is a shared responsibility between government and the community.”

The generosity, compassion and admirable sense of community spirit displayed by Jenny is a fine example of this.”

An elderly Bullsbrook resident, who found herself stranded during the large Walyunga National Park blaze at the end of February, received an unexpected offer of assistance.

“She met up with Ms Cronin, who followed her back home. Jenny then kindly provided food, drink and overnight accommodation for her because of the extended nature of the fire.”

“Next morning the continuing fire was still preventing Ms Cronin from returning home. Ms Cronin explained to a call taker that she was 76 years old and had been out all day. She was now feeling exhausted and anxious, and could not get into her home because of road closures.

She went on to explain that she was with her car, sitting alone outside the shops and had no family or friends close by, and it was getting dark.

Ms Cronin was asked to remain where she was while DFES investigated what help was available to her.

DFES staff member and Call Centre Coordinator Julie Bavington hit upon an idea and called a personal friend, Mrs Jenny Taplin who lived in nearby Averley with her husband and 11 year old son Connor.

Jenny explained the situation and enquired whether Mrs Taplin could collect Ms Cronin and take her in temporarily.

Jenny was more than happy to assist,” Julie said.

“In practice this does not always occur, perhaps partly due to confusion...”

“We have acted to ensure that the process is quick and simple for volunteers, and are committed to supporting them in their important roles.”

“Jenny, saying that she feels like part of this.”

“Not everybody is lucky enough to have a chance to sit in a fire appliance...”

“They were taken on a tour of the station, with Connor, who is autistic, particularly enjoying the visit and chance to sit in a fire appliance.”

“We all have a part to play in how we respond and recover from bushfire because it is a shared responsibility between government and the community.”

The generosity, compassion and admirable sense of community spirit displayed by Jenny is a fine example of this.”

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In turn Jenny said she was happy to have been of assistance, and explained that coincidentally her own home was threatened by a large bushfire just a week later.

“It is major events like these that highlight how people are able to rely on each other in times of need,” Allan said.

“Allen expressed his gratitude for the generosity, compassion and admirable sense of community spirit displayed by Jenny is a fine example of this.”

“It’s really good news that others will take the opportunity to assist neighbours and people who require help in an emergency.”
The northern wheatbelt town of Mullewa, like many other small towns scattered across WA, has a strong and dedicated local volunteer fire brigade. It is a close knit community of just over 500 and current brigade members number 14.

The volunteers make themselves available at any time day or night to turn out to bush and structure fires, hazardous materials incidents plus a diversity of rescues including road crashes, and are also visible supporting their local community in various other ways.

Brigade Captain Tony Crudeli said Mullewa Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service (VFRS) firefighters were strongly committed to protecting people caught up in emergencies.

“In the last year the Mullewa VFRS has responded to more than 35 incidents across our patch,” he said.

“We also get involved in the annual smoke alarm program and are always happy to visit some of our elderly people in their home units. We are helping to give these seniors some extra peace of mind by placing fresh batteries in their alarms.”

Anzac Day is another time when the local volunteers make a point of marching with representatives from the town’s other emergency services and locals, to show their respects to the town’s other emergency services marching with representatives from the local volunteers make a point of marching with representatives from the town’s other emergency services and locals, to show their respects to the town’s other emergency services and to the families. Guests witnessed the unveiling of a plaque and were invited to view the updated premises and facilities.

The opening also coincided with the annual Captain’s Dinner where Commissioner Gregson presented long service medals to volunteer firefighters Wayne Crudeli (five years), Rodney Messina (10 years) and Andrew Messina (20 years).

In later years with the role of vehicle rescue coming on board, a small building was added to the side of the station to house the light tanker and rescue trailer. The premises were also put to good use, hosting many training nights, meetings and social events.

Tony said there had been changes over the years and the brigade continued to move with the times.

“Installing the right equipment and support for the job makes a world of difference compared to what we had years ago,” he said.

He recalls that back in the early 1950s one of the catalysts for forming a town brigade was a large fire that resulted in the Club Hotel burning down.

“There was a group of about 18 or so original members and we started off with about three days of initial training,” Charlie said.

“I’ve remained with the brigade since it began because there’s a need in the community, and if you can save lives and property, that’s a good thing.

“Not too long ago we turned out to a car crash where a local farmer’s son had been seriously injured with a broken neck. The brigade’s efforts helped ensure he was safely removed from the vehicle, which was a good result in the circumstances.”

The brigade first occupied humble premises in a small shed alongside the Mullewa swimming pool that also accommodated the brigade’s original Bedford fire truck. In June 1980 a new fire station was opened, and a decade later the Muirat pump replaced the original vehicle.

The opening was also coincided with the annual Captain’s Dinner where Commissioner Gregson presented long service medals to volunteer firefighters Wayne Crudeli (five years), Rodney Messina (10 years) and Andrew Messina (20 years).

In addition, the brigade felt it was fitting to make a special presentation, on behalf of its members, to District Officer Gordon Purvis. He received a plaque thanking him for his continual commitment and professionalism to the Mullewa brigade during his many years as their manager.

“Presently, however, we are fortunate to be able to draw on a few centuries of firefighting experience from among our current crop of volunteers.”

A revitalised Portal2Progress (P2P) website provides volunteers and staff with the opportunity to innovate the Department’s business and the way emergency services are delivered across the State.

Originally launched in December 2011, P2P was designed to capture ideas and innovations from the people who know the business of emergency management best — volunteers and emergency services personnel, career firefighters and the corporate staff who support them.

Efficiencies in the way ideas and innovations are submitted, assessed and actioned were identified following a review of P2P where feedback was sought from all users.

The new look website is now easier to navigate and provides users with a number of ways to get involved. Idea initiators can submit new ideas and innovations across any aspect of DFES business. These may be specific to a Command, service, brigade or unit, a statewide issue or apply to a specific region or an operational or corporate issue - there are no limits.

Governance and Strategy Executive Director David Caporn applauded the involvement of volunteers and staff from across the State in submitting their ideas on P2P to date.

“It’s been great to see the way volunteers and staff have embraced P2P,” David said.

“At present, however, we are fortunate to be able to draw on a few centuries of firefighting experience from among our current crop of volunteers.”

P2P works!

An innovative idea from Senior Firefighter Andrew Sauron demonstrates the ease of the P2P process.

“My idea was the placement of a biohazard sticker on a car after a road crash incident,” Andrew said.

“There are a number of biohazards within a vehicle after a crash, which presents a risk to personnel attending the scene.

“I found P2P easy to use – I submitted my idea, it was assessed and then implemented.

“I recommend that you post your ideas on P2P as it works, Don’t hesitate – put your suggestions on P2P instead of just talking about them.”
On game day the ACES were in good form and looking to square the ledger at the curtain raiser to the West Coast Eagles and Port Adelaide match.

“The game was played in near perfect conditions, with only a slight breeze affecting one end,” Leon said.

“We always try to get away to a fast start in the one off games to gain the early ascendancy, and that’s exactly what we achieved.”

“The quarter time score was ACES 6 goals 5 points to the ADF’s 1 point. Fremantle firefighter Ben Caputi was literally firing and kicked three goals for the quarter.

“The second quarter saw our team kick into the breeze, but it didn’t slow us down. The half time scoreboard showed ACES 11 goals 7 points, to our opposition who were on 3 goals 3 points.

“One of the concerns for us was the game being extended to 25 minute quarters. With the ADF having a much younger side, there was a feeling they could run out better in the second half.

“Keeping that in mind, the ACES put the game away by three quarter time, leading 16 goals 14 points to 5 goals 4 points.

“The ADF managed to win the last quarter and pile on five goals, to their credit. The final score read ACES 20 goals 16 points to ADF 10 goals 5 points.”

With the ledge now even at five games each, the ACES are keen to take the lead next year for the first time.

That game is likely to be played in Adelaide in 2014, but the plan is to hopefully get it to Melbourne before the Collingwood and Essendon ANZAC day match at the MCG.

Leon said the Western ACES representatives would like to thank DFES management for their support of players and the event.

“Deputy Commissioner Operations Lloyd Bailey attended the match while on holiday in South Australia, and after the game presented a gift from DFES to ACES coach Rod Campbell,” he said.

“Our appreciation goes to the Western Australian Fire and Rescue Football Club, The Fire Dogs, for backing and encouraging each of our players.

“Eric Cain from Fleet Network came on board as a club sponsor and supported the players for the trip, and we are grateful for his involvement.”

Coordinated by the Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Society of WA, this unique vertical challenge of more than 1,100 steps, is in its seventh year in Perth. Organisers invite participants to seek sponsorship as they strive to reach the top of one of Perth’s most iconic buildings, Central Park.

The race was even more popular this year, with MS Society of WA Chief Executive Officer Marcus Stafford saying they had exceeded all goals.

“A record 1,000 participants raised over $239,000 and we thank everyone who entered and supported the cause,” Mr Stafford said.

Fire and emergency services were well represented with four career and one volunteer Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) team, along with several solo firefighters participating.

Career FRS teams wore full structural level 2 turnout gear, including breathing apparatus, to complete the strenuous 53 flight climb.

They were grouped together and set off a minute apart, so there was a scramble to get into a good position early.

Firefighter Kellie Betts from Murdoch Station team ‘Fire Foxes’ said the lead changed several times between individuals.

“Competition between us was intense, with trophies sponsored by MS and bragging rights up for grabs,” she said.

“Now that I have experienced the event, I think pacing yourself is an important tactic and one I would use next year.”

The Osborne Park Fire Station team ‘Engine 68’ earned the fastest time of the group. They took a combined 56.26 minutes to reach the top and set a new record, while the Murdoch Fire Station women’s team raised the largest amount of $1,435. All funds raised by firefighters involved in the challenge go towards funding an expansion to the Hamilton Hill high support accommodation facility in the southern suburbs. The unit houses people living with MS, and provides support and assistance so they can carry out their daily routines.
Rugby Union
tilt quite a challenge

As the whistle blew at the
curtain raiser for the Western
Force versus Waratahs
match at nib Stadium
recently, the wait was finally
over for firefighters and
police who were keen to line
up once again to do battle
on the field.

The aim for the WA Fire and Rescue
Service (FRS) team was to end the
four year dominance of the WA
Police team in the annual series.
They were caught on the back foot
easily though, with their opponents
scoring two quick tries in the first
10 minutes.

The momentum then changed, with
the gap closing to a 10-7 lead to WA
Police until five minutes to go, when
they scored another two tries to win
the game 22-7.

Fire and Emergency Services
Commissioner Wayne Gregson said the
annual series had become a welcome
tradition for emergency services.

"While there is certainly a bit of rivalry
between the services, the match is an
important opportunity for firefighters
and police to socialise outside the
rigours and pressure of an emergency," COMMISSIONER GREGSON said.

Station Officer Michael Parker said the
atmosphere was buzzing and a great
day was had by both sides.

"Although we lost, the score was close
until the very end when the opposition
moved ahead and blew out the final
score," he said.

"Brendan Ash, who was FRS captain
on the day, played an outstanding
game to be named man of the match.

"The crowd got right behind the
firefighters, showing their support
during the high ball and tug of war
competition against police officers at
the half time break of the Force and
Waratahs match.

"The result ended up being a draw for
high ball, with the FRS outnumbered
and losing the tug of war with a man
down.

"A huge thank you goes to everyone
who supported our team both on and
off the field, and helped to make the
game happen."

Michael said it was all for a
great cause, with monies raised
being donated to the WA Police
Commissioner’s Fund for Sick Kids,
'Bright Blue'. The match was part of
the Western Force’s 'Force Behind
the Force' program.

The WA Fire and Rescue Rugby
Union Football Club was established
in 2010 and plays matches against
local, national and international
service rugby teams.

A comprehensive workshop held in Busselton recently
attracted around 100
weather, fire modelling and
risk assessment researchers,
forecasters and fire officers
from across Australia.

The theme focused on taking
meteorology research and applying
it in a practical way to operations.

Items covered on the agenda included the latest on forecasting practices,
operational applications, bushfire risk
management, technology and training.

A packed program featured eminent
international and national speakers,
including Dr Tim Brown of the Desert
Research Institute in Reno, Nevada,
who is Director of the Western Regional
Climate Centre. He established and
directs the Program for Climate,
Ecosystem and Fire Applications, and
spoke on gridded high resolution fire
weather and danger.

Professor George Mine of the University
of Western Australia’s School of
Computer Science and Software
Engineering, spoke on the Australian
bushfire simulator and demonstrated
its applications. Landgate officer Adrian
Allen also provided a live demonstration
of the Aurora bushfire simulator.

Australian expert Dr Justin Leonard
from the CSIRO, a leader in bushfire
urban design research, spoke about
investigating the behaviour of buildings
during unplanned bushfire events with a
view to improving their prospects of
survival.

"Feedback indicated the workshop had
been a great success, with the three
days providing an excellent professional
development experience."

The 2013 workshop was supported by the
Australian Government Bureau of Meteorology,
DFES, the Department of Parks and Wildlife (formerly Department of Environment and Conservation) and the Bushfire CRC.
Support shown for firefighter

The WA firefighting fraternity gathered recently for a special fundraising football game in support of Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) Station Officer Kim Lusk.

It turned out to be a fruitful night, with both career and volunteer firefighters, DFES staff and the community getting right behind the event to raise money for Kim’s overseas medical treatment.

FRS Station Officer Lexie Bowring came up with the idea and coordinated fundraising activities, while District Officer Rick Curtis rallied the footy committee.

“Kim, who has been suffering with some health issues, has been a member of our firefighting family for the last 10 years after graduating from Trainee Firefighter School 52,” Lexie said.

“Last year her husband Steve also joined the FRS from School 72.”

The social Aussie Rules football contest between FRS officers and firefighters took shape within a month, including donations of items, money and assistance.

Lexie said the game, captained by Kim and Steve, was a resounding success.

“It was played in good spirit, without too many hip and shoulders,” she said.

“Both sides looked fantastic on the field, in specially designed jumpers donated by former firefighter Derrin Rodriguez of Vadya Sports.

“The end result saw firefighters come out in front with a score of 65 points to 63 points, but we can safely say we were all victors on the night.”

Lexie added that cash taken at the game amounted to $14,450 and in addition to the auction items, jumper money and other donations, a total of close to $30,000 was raised.

“These donations were added to the proceeds of a separate DFES initiative where staff were given the opportunity to donate to the appeal via a direct payroll donation,” she said.

“The combined funds were used to cover a large portion of Kim’s medical expenses when she underwent extensive and taxing treatment in Germany.

“It was wonderfully inspiring to see the fire service and wider DFES community banding together and demonstrating their generosity and compassion for a friend and colleague.”

Kim was awarded the game ball on match night, along with her footy jumper, and these were individually mounted and framed before being presented to her by Perth Fire Station B Platoon.

Fire and emergency services personnel in the North West joined with local clubs and groups recently for the ‘Welcome to Derby Day’ expo held especially for people new to town.

Central Kimberley SES District Officer Matt Reiner was present to support Derby State Emergency Service and Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service members.

“It was rewarding to see that both services attracted quite a bit of interest,” Matt said.

“The VFRS handled several enquiries and people took away recruitment pamphlets for further consideration.”

“Derby SES did very well to sign up six new members, and the unit has since gained another four.”

Hosted by the Shire of Derby-West Kimberley, the popular event was held at the local Sportsman’s Club.

It provided recent arrivals with the opportunity to check out various community displays, and discover what kind of voluntary and other activities Derby has to offer.

Song, dance and bush tucker in NAIDOC Week celebration

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander emblems were raised with the Australian flag outside the Emergency Services Complex in Cockburn Central to symbolise the history, culture and achievements of Indigenous people, and celebrate NAIDOC Week.

Respected Nyongoor community Elder, Oriel Green, delivered a Welcome to Country which was followed by an acoustic performance from award-winning Indigenous band the Bartlett Brothers.

A highlight of the event was a performance by the Wadunbahn Dance ensemble. Appearing in traditional attire, they danced and sang three songs of significance originating from the Waduk tribal area in the State’s South West.

Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner Wayne Gregson said DFES was committed to building a resilient Western Australia with communities that work together, and consultation and inclusion were vital to achieving this.

“NAIDOC Week is a time for our Department to celebrate the partnerships we have formed with Indigenous people to jointly care for and protect this land,” Commissioner Gregson said.

“There are numerous places across the State where this is happening in a very practical way, exemplifying the outstanding local knowledge and outcomes that Indigenous people can bring to the emergency services.

“DFES is looking to work even more closely with Indigenous communities in the future. This means continuously engaging to create an understanding and acceptance of the shared responsibility we all have in preventing, preparing for and responding to emergencies.”

To round off the event, guests sampled a variety of food with a traditional flavour supplied by Aboriginal owned and operated Kudji Kitchen. The fare ranged from kangaroo meat shepherds pies with bush tomato sauce, to scones with wild berry and fig jams.

The Indigenous Strategy and Policy branch also coordinated and attended NAIDOC Family Days at Bassendean Oval and the City of Armadale Champion Centre in Seville Grove.

Volunteers from several services were represented and they spent time interacting with visitors, providing helpful information and answering questions about a range of safety matters.
New planning and reporting system to bring efficiencies

A range of benefits will flow from a new integrated planning and reporting system (IPRS) being phased in at DFES over the next six months.

Director Risk Planning and Reporting Carole Dowd said IPRS is a web based system that will enable DFES to fully integrate risk management, planning and performance monitoring.

“Four different modules manage a range of functions. Implementation includes user training at each stage,” Carole said.

“The system will be hosted on cloud technology that will enable users to access data regardless of their location.”

“The project team is currently finalising user acceptance testing on the planning and measurement and project testing on the planning and finalising user acceptance” Carole said.

DFES is committed to achieving best practice in emergency service delivery, and is currently rolling out a department wide Enterprise Risk Management Framework (ERMF) that will facilitate the reporting of risk in a coordinated and consistent way. Corporate Risk Manager Esma Pollock said that with DFES transitioning to a government department, it is obliged to meet various compliance requirements.

“Risk management has been identified as an important business tool to assist the Department to meet its strategic objectives,” Esma said.

Planning and Performance Measurement

This module will be used to record assigned actions and tasks through business plans and track progress. The module also has the capability to track progress through performance indicators, scorecards and dashboard reporting.

Project Management

The module will be used by the Strategic Program Office (SPO) for managing projects on the DFES program of works. The SPO currently uses a stand alone version of the software which will be upgraded to the integrated software suite. Additional functionality is expected to be rolled out in the future.

Business Requirements Database

A DFES customisation will provide a database to hold business requirements that are pending resource allocation to progress. This will be particularly useful for informing strategic planning including development of resourcing strategies to achieve complex, longer term outcomes.

Risk Management

This module will be aligned to the new DFES Risk Management Framework. It will support the monitoring and control of corporate risk, including progress reporting at various levels.

Implementation of enterprise risk management framework

“The discipline had been applied in pockets at a local level, but it tended to be inconsistent and not in compliance with the required ISO 31000 standards.

“The framework will capture corporate risks and opportunities in a planned, consistent and measurable way.” Esma said the ERMF roll out commenced in July and is expected to be completed by the end of 2013.

“The roll out is being delivered in tandem with the Integrated Planning and Reporting System and covers state wide operations, excluding the functions of the Office of Bushfire Risk Management,” she said.

“It includes training and awareness on the DFES risk management framework, and a suite of intuitive tools and resources. These will assist and enable staff to identify assess, rank, report and treat risks, as well as capitalise on risk opportunities. Development of local, Command and enterprise wide risk registers are also part of the package.”

ISO 31000:2009 Risk Management Principles and Guidelines provides a framework and process for managing risk that delivers sound principles for effective management and corporate governance. Using it can help organisations to increase the likelihood of achieving objectives, improve the identification of opportunities and threats, and effectively allocate and use resources for risk treatment. Risk management practices can also be compared with an internationally recognised benchmark.

How can you be involved?

We are looking for system champions to support the roll out of the various modules. If you are interested in becoming a system champion, please contact Carole at carole.dowd@dfes.wa.gov.au or call 9395 9464.

The promotion of nine personnel to District Officer (DO) rank was recently celebrated at a ceremony held at Cockburn Emergency Services Complex. Each new DO received epaulettes and a certificate to mark the occasion. All have completed the DO Training Program and will work in areas that include Operations, Operations Capability, Country and Metropolitan. They are also fulfilling roles such as the newly formed DO Communications and Urban Capability. Back row (l-r): DOs Gavin Eva, Clint Kuchel, Alan Crossman, Ray Buchan and Terry Shehan. Front: DOs Paul Heal, Mike Klenner, Will Blackshaw, Deputy Commissioner Operations Command Lloyd Bialy, Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner Wayne Gregson, Perth South East Metropolitan DO Brett Finlay and DOs Sven Anderson and Terry Coles.
International exercise tests Australia’s CBR response

A combined Australian team recently made its mark on the international stage when it participated in CAPEX 2013 – a Chemical, Biological and Radiological (CBR) counter terrorism capability exercise that ran in Virginia in the United States of America (USA).

The overall aim was to test the capability of forensic investigation and intelligence gathering in the CBR response phase, with specialist teams demonstrating capabilities and sharing tactics, techniques and procedures.

Held at Fort Story Special Forces Training Base from 8-14 April, the event involved 300 specialists from the United Kingdom, USA, Canada and Australia.

Three separate scenarios developed, built and managed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), focused on individual chemical, biological and radiological incidents. Each exercise was conducted over an eight hour period and all countries rotated through the three scenarios over four days.

The role of firefighters on each of the three scenarios over four days.

Prior to arriving in the USA, Department of Fire and Emergency Services representative and CBRN Hazmat Manager Greg Feeney, met with 33 other participants from emergency services around Australia to take part in three days of training at Holesworthy Army Barracks in New South Wales.

“During the three days of training, we provided specialist Hazmat advice and decontamination procedures for the Police and Australian Defence Force. It was beneficial for the firefighting group to become acquainted as well as have the opportunity to practice and refine operating procedures on a number of scenarios. We also developed an operational methodology to support crime scene management procedures, ready for our international test.”

Greg said the CAPEX exercises were biennial and allowed the Australian contingent to see the capability of other countries in terms of equipment and procedures when responding to a CBR incident.

“The first day was devoted to viewing demonstrations and inspecting equipment including underwater robots, a FBI Hazmat response appliance and state of the art incident control vehicle,” Greg said.

“Many of the scenarios involved live agents, including radiological sources and unexploded ordnance, which provided a realistic training environment.

“The ability to experience new technology involved in the collection and identification of material, and learn firsthand about improved decontamination and interagency hand over procedures, was very important for our own and the nation’s response in the future.

“Gaining an understanding of decontamination methods adopted by other countries and the move from bulk water to specialised chemical cleaning agents was also interesting.

“While other countries have moved to using robots for assessing CBR incidents, in Australia we are still very much reliant on the hands on approach.”

Other team members, including police and scientific officers, were involved in various additional tasks such as investigating the scene, identifying potential hazards, collecting relevant evidence and producing it to a forensic laboratory for analysis.

Judges from each participating country scrutinised the scenarios and feedback following the exercise indicated that Australia had performed extremely well.

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The response capability for the greater Bunbury area was increased considerably when a second firefighting crew came on shift at the local fire station in April.

Bunbury career Fire and Rescue Service is the first country station in the State to have two full time crews on duty 24 hours a day.

The increased capability will enable career crews to attend simultaneous calls and, like metropolitan stations, provide a greater initial response to larger incidents,” Chris said.

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Assistant Commissioner Country Chris Arnol said the additional crew meant more responders were now available to cover the area.

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Turnout capacity increased in south west

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Bush Fire Brigades across Western Australia are set to receive lifesaving defibrillators, to further enhance the safety of all emergency service volunteers and the people they protect, following a generous donation.

The Royal Automobile Club of WA (RAC) recently donated $100,000 to emergency services, through DFES, to supply a further 45 devices.

Emergency Services Minister Joe Francis said the equipment would complement the 205 defibrillators already supplied by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services at a cost of $504,000.

“Forty volunteer Bush Fire Brigades will receive this latest batch of equipment that is capable of resuscitating firefighters and fire victims who suffer cardiac arrest,” Mr Francis said.

“The welfare of our firefighters is paramount, and the defibrillators will provide extra protection to these volunteers who give exceptional service to the community.”

Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner Wayne Gregson said DFES began the project to place automatic external defibrillators, or AEDs, on certain fire and emergency services appliances in late 2012.

“We are committed to doing everything we can to ensure the safety of our fire and emergency services personnel,” Commissioner Gregson said.

“The introduction of defibrillation equipment does not mean the role of paramedics as first responder has been replaced. Rather, defibrillators will facilitate personnel receiving first aid sooner if they need it.”

“If a member of the public required immediate assistance during routine or emergency operations, crews would also be in a position to provide that service.”

The 205 devices already supplied have been installed in major career and volunteer Fire and Rescue Service and State Emergency Service appliances.

Each AED has a protective waterproof plastic stowage case and spare pads that can be used on adults and children.

The supply of the 45 extra AED units and training to ensure emergency services personnel attain the core competencies to effectively operate the AED, will be administered through the relevant DFES regional office.

With energy costs increasing, consumers have not only had to become smarter about their consumption of electricity, but also the way it is generated.

It is not surprising then, that the demand for renewable, greener technologies like solar energy, is on the rise.

Since 2009 Australia has seen a tenfold increase in the number of domestic household solar power installations.

Current estimates suggest that around 17 percent of suitable house rooftops are now home to solar panel photovoltaic arrays (a linked collection of solar panels producing electricity).

The explosion of this technology, however, also poses the problem of how emergency responders can safely deal with these systems when called to incidents involving damaged solar panels.

Perth Station Officer Les Holden has been researching this issue for a number of years and is now extremely knowledgeable on the subject.

“A large body of research has already been done in Western Australia that resulted in development of a comprehensive training program for fire crews,” Les said.

“Power generated while the sun is shining generally runs through a cable from the solar array to the inverter, then through the roof space of a home.

“The main hazard for responders is firstly that power will continue to be generated in daylight even though we are fighting a house fire. Secondly, we are unaware of exactly where the cable is situated.

“It is important that firefighters are educated on how to recognise and isolate the panels so that we can do our job and ensure our safety at the same time.”

When the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC) decided on a national safety campaign to address this issue, they visited Perth to consult Les and also sent a film crew along to capture material for a safety training DVD.

“We involved the career and volunteer Fire and Rescue Service, Bush Fire Service, and State Emergency Service (SES) in the DVD because in the field of emergency services, all these personnel need to know how to isolate the arrays,” Les said.

“Whether it is fire, flood or storm damage, it is imperative that we are fully aware and in the best possible position to safely mitigate the hazard.”

Kalamunda SES Rescue Team Leader Ian Milne said it was pleasing to see WA at the forefront of facilitating a safer working environment for all emergency personnel.

The informational AFAC DVD, Safety and Photovoltaic Arrays for Fire and Emergency Services, was released at the end of June.

“The DVD is not freely available to members of the general public because it is aimed at trained responders. AFAC member agencies can obtain the source file for the video free of cost to load on a password protected intranet or other IT system, or they can purchase DVDs.

For further information contact:
Cathrina McGauchoe@afac.com.au

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Lifesaving defibrillators continue to roll out

Solar panel safety focus for first responders
RESOURCES AND TRAINING

When you picture an SES search, the first image that probably springs to mind is volunteers in orange overalls, either on foot, in vehicles or possibly on horseback. But there is another string to the service’s bow and that is the use of bicycles, with at least three metropolitan units using them as a fast search option to help locate missing persons.

Bayswater started the trend more than 10 years ago, and has a well established and enthusiastic Bike Team of 12 members.

Section Leader Bill White said that most of his fellow riders were keen cyclists who owned bicycles and enjoyed social riding in their free time.

“The Bayswater SES Bike Team fills a niche that allows members to easily access areas where vehicles can’t go, and places where walking would be too slow,” Bill said.

“Of our call outs involved searching for a man missing in Muliatto. The area had plenty of cycle paths and walkways, as well as cul de sacs, and the bikes made it a breeze to cover a lot of area very swiftly.

“During a high profile search for a missing teenager near Brookton in 2012, the Bike Team volunteers located a set of quad bike keys.

“As a result, WA Police redirected the search to a fresh area and the missing boy was found within an hour.”

Bill said there was a training induction course for any inexperienced Bayswater SES Bike Team members who wanted to learn the basics.

“There is no expectation that they will have the skill of Cadel Evans, but once mobile, we do encourage consistent practice, up to 40 kilometres per week with at least 20 kilometres per month off road, on trails or gravel roads,” Bill said.

“This helps bike riding become a natural activity so that when team members are searching, the whole focus is on what or who they are looking for, rather than changing gears or the mechanics of the bike.

“The team meets once a week for inhouse or external training, and development sessions, in addition to normal SES unit training.”

Recently the Bayswater team organised a weekend ride for five members and two back up crew.

“We rode the Waterous Loop section of the Mundar Biddi mountain bike trail and stayed overnight in the Bidjar Ngoulin hut,” Bill said.

“It was an exhilarating and challenging experience that was enjoyed by all riders.”

At Bayswater SES the normal deployment of the Bike Team is in pairs, with one member acting as Team Leader and Scribe, and the other as Radio Operator and Navigator.

Each member carries basic repair equipment, water and food, and one first aid kit is supplied per pair of cyclists.

Long serving Gosnells SES Volunteer Graham Fider, who regularly completes a 35 kilometre cycle ride to and from work, said unit members found using bikes in the field was a definite plus.

“Bikes are another resource in our armoury, which we can place on the ute when called out to a search,” Graham said.

“The bonus is being able to get mobile quickly and access narrow, restricted areas.

“They are good on gazetted bike paths, grassed areas and along rivers, as well as roads.

“Moving around on the bikes also allows us to stop and talk to members of the public who can sometimes supply helpful information relating to the search.”

Fellow Gosnells SES Local Manager Paul Halfordt said the unit at first operated on some fairly old, dilapidated bikes.

“Last year we were pleasantly surprised when someone in the community, who had seen us using this equipment, later donated three brand new 24 gear mountain bikes,” he said.

“It was fantastic to receive them, and we particularly appreciate the wider range of quad bike keys, as the original bikes were pretty uncomfortable after a while.

“Our search capability received a welcome boost, and we would now like to replace another two bikes to ensure all five are in first class order.”

Wanneroo/Joondalup SES Local Manager Bill Hansen said the unit had four mountain bikes which have been included in a couple of urban searches.

“We will shortly begin the process of putting a more formal structure and training program in place for those volunteers who wish to use the bikes,” he said.

“It will be based on the manual produced by Bayswater SES, and should be finalised by the end of this year.”

Complex building exercises hit the mark

Firefighters practiced and confirmed existing procedures at a series of eight structural fire exercises conducted in complex buildings during March.

Crews from Perth, Daglish, Osborne Park, Kensington, Belmont and Claremont attended a mix of exercises with the Combined Ladder Platform appliance present at each one.

The exercises, which lasted between two and three hours, took place at a variety of complex structure sites including Centro Galleria shopping centre in Morley, the new Perth Arena, Royal Perth Hospital, Curtin University and other metropolitan venues including multi-storey carparks.

Assistant Commissioner Metropolitan Brad Stringer said the purpose of complex building procedures was to help inform the development of standardised command structures for the multitude of response roles required to effectively combat an incident in this type of building.

“Although the construction type and purpose of a complex building may vary, the common feature is the requirement for the remote location of a Forward Control Point from which to conduct operations,” Brad said.

“This training has been invaluable for metropolitan crews and stakeholders. It has validated existing operational preparedness and response processes for this type of incident, and identified possible modifications.”

Each exercise varied in its nature, demanding investigation and resource models by first responders in order to provide the right mix of resources within required timeframes.

The identification and planning of appropriate responses to single and multiple compartment fires, vehicle fires, and search and rescue tasks were required, utilising live and simulated casualties.

Brad said this was a rare opportunity for officers to practice Incident Management Team (IMT) processes within major public buildings, and around the Perth Central Business District that present a high risk due to the regular presence of large numbers of people.

“Whilst IMTs were reminded of the demands of site control for incidents at major structures in densely occupied areas, Incident Control Vehicle crews were also refreshed in major structure fire communications planning,” he said.

“Many useful lessons were learned or reinforced, and the reports and recommendations flowing from this series of exercises will be used to strengthen and improve doctrine.”

Brad said the success of the exercise was a result of the hard work of the coordinators, umpires and participants, and the initiative will be supported into the future.

Structural fire exercise at Curtin University.
USAR maximise training opportunity with road show

When the area was spared and their services were no longer required, USAR Taskforce members took the initiative and put their specialist gear and expertise to good use.

USAR Officer Arek Lach said they conducted training with both the local Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service (VFRS) and State Emergency Service (SES), whose members benefited from the unexpected opportunity.

“We displayed the USAR capability, resources and equipment to inform and educate not only emergency services volunteers from the Pilbara region, but also people from the local community,” Arek said.

“Due to the success of the display, it was decided to replicate it at major towns between Karratha and Perth, towns between Karratha and Perth, including Exmouth, Carnarvon and Geraldton.

“Two USAR technicians, an equipment officer and a canine handler with trained dog Zena, picked up the Combination POD and canine, and commenced the journey south.

“The presentations and displays showcased how the taskforce operates and the specific skill sets of its members, as well as the capability it has to complement and assist local resources throughout the State during large scale incidents.”

First stop on the long trip back was Exmouth, where 15 VFRS members turned out on their training night to see the presentation, and examine the Combination POD and its technical equipment.

The following morning a display was set up at the main shopping mall. Many local residents checked out the POD to learn more about the resources available within DFES to assist their small, cyclone prone town, should the need arise.

Arek said on the following night the road show rolled into Carnarvon, where around 20 VFRS and 16 SES volunteers turned out to view the presentation.

“With the devastating local floods still fresh in the minds of many volunteers, it was of great interest to all who attended,” he said.

“They were very keen to learn about the USAR capability and equipment that is available to assist volunteers and local governments during such events, as well as aid in the recovery after natural disasters.

“One item of particular interest was the Taskforce Rapid Damage Assessment Tablets. “They enable members to carry out effective and expedient damage assessment post cyclone, flood, fire, storm, or any other natural disaster or incident, and effectively convey the information to the Incident Management Team.

“This provides accurate data that helps with prioritising requests for assistance and speeding up recovery.”

In Geraldton, 12 members of the VFRS and a number of career FRS staff came along to the USAR overview and inspected the associated equipment.

Arek said the road show had been a great success and allowed USAR team members to inform regional volunteers, country staff, local governments and other key stakeholders about the capability.

“We were able to showcase the USAR taskforce and its ability to respond anytime, anywhere, to help local staff and volunteers with additional personnel and equipment,” he said.

“At each stop along the way the star attraction was the very intelligent and skilled USAR canine Zena. Everyone commented on her impeccable behaviour and proficiency for nimble climbing up ladders.”

Volunteer firies leave it all on the track

Hundreds of volunteer firefighters, their skills honed from months of intensive training, faced off at the 2013 Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service (VFRS) Annual Easter State Championships.

They descended on the traditional venue in North Fremantle for what was the event’s 110th clash. Competitors came from across the State and were joined by four teams from Victoria.

Deputy Commissioner Operations Lloyd Bailey used the occasion to pay tribute to brigade members.

“Volunteer firefighters are greatly valued and throughout the past bushfire season their efforts were instrumental in ensuring the safety of people across the State,” Lloyd said.

“The Championships provide an opportunity to witness them in action on the track, displaying the kind of unique expertise, agility and teamwork required at a fire emergency.

“It is a great spectacle and an opportunity for the community to see our volunteers who do so much for others.”

After a full card of hotly contested events, Bussendean VFRS took the ‘A’ Class title with 64 points.

In second place on 47 points was Harvey, followed by the 2013 Victorian title winners Kangaroo Flat who scored 36 points.

The ‘B’ Class was a close call, with South Hedland triumphing on 41 points, North Kalgoorlie coming in second on 36 points and Brunswick Junction bringing up third place with 33 points.

In ‘C’ Class Mandurah 2 grabbed first place on 29 points, with Harvey 3 right behind them on 28 points and Southern Cross third with 16 points.

When it came to the Junior Class, Northam swept the field to claim first, while Roleystone took second and visitors Eaglehawk third.

It was a stellar year for the Bussendean team which has all the hallmarks of an incredibly successful team, having won 25 Easter Championships titles over the years.

Not only can they lay claim to winning this year’s Championships, but also to taking out third place in the WA State Open and second at the Victorian Championships.

The brigade’s talented Marc Papalia was declared Champion Firefighter of the meet for the fifth consecutive time. Not surprisingly, his victory had earlier been repeated at both the State Open and Victorian Championships.

The WAVFRS Association Executive Officer Max Osborn congratulated both local and Victorian competitors.

“Everyone who competed trained hard and gave their best,” he said. “This year we saw many strong performances in what was a terrific contest.

“It takes a great deal of concerted effort to deliver a successful Championships. Year after year the Association can count on the contribution of many devoted and experienced volunteers who work behind the scenes in all sorts of areas. Without their input we simply could not stage the event, so well done to them all.

“Thanks also to the loyal and enthusiastic supporters who are also an important part of the event.”
Wellness branch growing to support DFES family

There have been some new developments within the Wellness branch and 2013 is proving to be an exciting year.

Wellness Manager Anneliese Smith said commitment to the wellbeing of the DFES family had been reaffirmed with some excellent initiatives.

“Chaplain Daniel (Charlie) Watson has joined our team, bringing our total full time Chaplains to two, including Ron Wingate,” Anneliese said.

“We have also been funded for a position to relaunch and coordinate the highly regarded Peer Support Program.”

“In addition, Organisational and Industrial Psychology Masters student from the University of Western Australia, Charlotte Hunter, has been a welcome addition to the branch.

“She is on practicum placement for three months and her tasks have included consulting and providing detail and structure to the Peer Support program, including areas such as recruitment, training and supervision structures.

“Funding has also been allocated to train seven inhouse instructors in the accredited program of Mental Health First Aid which teaches people how to recognise the signs and symptoms of mental health problems, and provide support and direction for the person in distress.

“As a result, DFES will be able to make this training available across the State on an ongoing basis.”

DFES has embarked on a Professional Pathways project to assist personnel in identifying skills and knowledge requirements for their current or future roles.

Currently in the design and implementation stage, the project will be phased over three years. It will provide clarity for managers on what is available to develop their personnel and transparency for individuals to allow them to manage their own professional development.

The project will also determine a framework to enhance visibility of Professional Pathways via a simple online, self-managed learning system, an education calendar and catalogue.

It will focus on the detailed design and approach of three key categories:

- Technical Training
- Leadership Development
- Incident Management Pathways.

Assistant Commissioner Professional Development Darren Klemm said the initial emphasis was on existing high priority and incident management pathways.

“The project will help identify suitably skilled personnel in emergency situations for mobilisation to incidents,” Darren said.

“It will also enable DFES to provide evidence of skills and qualifications for personnel who attend incidents, verifying that they are qualified and endorsed within designated incident management roles and for specific hazards.

“The long term aim is a standard approach to roles and responsibilities to assist in the protection and welfare of all personnel attending incidents.”

An interim website has been launched that reflects this focus and highlights the initial key professional pathways.

**Wide range of input**

A user group and stakeholder workshop hosted by the Professional Development portfolio has been held at the WA Fire and Emergency Services Academy.

Project owner Superintendent Brad Delavale said the comprehensive forum kicked off the engagement process and provided an overview for participants, with volunteers from as far away as Karratha and as near as Rockingham providing valuable input.

“The workshop involved a broad representation from the Department’s diverse business and service areas, and focused on three key areas being the framework, communications and supporting technology,” Brad said.

“The outcomes exceeded our expectations and have contributed significantly to the project direction, with all attendees contributing a high level of cooperation and professionalism.”

**Next steps**

The project focus has now turned to developing pathways with job description owners for other roles. Volunteer pathways will be defined in phase two of the project over the 2013/14 financial year.

“Work is continuing to develop the education calendar and catalogue to meet the changing needs of the organisation,” Brad said.

“A review is also under way to understand the future training delivery requirements, including the use of new online training delivery options.”

For more information, contact Superintendent Professional Pathways Brad Delavale on 9454 0778. Feedback can be provided via email to PathwaysProject@dfes.wa.gov.au

**Intranet site**

The interim website to launch the priority pathways and the education calendar and catalogue are now available for use by all DFES personnel via the Intranet or Extranet.

By following your Command you can locate your pathway, then the Directory/Stream and Service/Business Unit, until you locate your role.

Each Pathway has a list of colour coded skill requirements that correspond to one of the three training categories within the catalogue, being Incident Management, Technical and Leadership.

To explore the Pathways website and find out how Pathways can support you now and into the future:

- Operational and corporate staff can visit the Intranet and select the Pathways icon.
- Volunteers can access Pathways via the Volunteer Portal or go to www.dfes.wa.gov.au/volunteers. Click on the Volunteer Portal icon, select enter and then the Pathways icon. If you are not registered, select the Register Icon using your relevant service volunteer ID.

**Pathways right on course**

Calling all experienced musicians from across the WA emergency services community, both career and volunteer, who are interested in performing in the inaugural WA Fire and Emergency Services Band.

This new musical marching band will perform at special Department of Fire and Emergency Services events and ceremonial functions.

To participate in the band, you will need to:

- Play one of the following instruments: Bass Trombone, Tenor Trombone, Bugle, Euphonium, French Horn, Tenor Saxophone, Alto Saxophone, Cornet, Snare Drum.
- Participate in band rehearsals and training sessions for marching band duties.
- Train and perform on a voluntary basis.

No previous experience in playing in a band or marching band is required. Beginners are welcome as training will be provided at no cost, by a qualified and experienced former Australian Army Band Drum Major.

**Formation of WA Fire and Emergency Services Band**

**Musicians Wanted**

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**Pathways right on course**
Supporting sick and injured workers and volunteers

An injury can have significant consequences for your personal and professional life as you recover, and the DFES Workers’ Compensation and Injury Management (WCIM) branch is committed to helping you make this journey as smooth as possible.

Manager Neil Munslow-Davies said an early return to work on suitable duties was an important step in recovery that would lead to an optimal outcome.

“The aim of the Injury Management System is to keep you at work or assist your return at the earliest appropriate time, and our team can help you achieve the best possible injury management,” Neil said.

“This extends to all volunteers covered by the DFES Personal Accident policy when the injury occurs while undertaking volunteering duties, however, Bush Fire Brigade volunteers are covered under their Local Government insurance.

"Additionally, employees may also be assisted to return to work following non work related injuries."

Neil said maintaining a positive attitude and remaining focused on what you need to do are shown to benefit people as they recover.

"Keeping appointments, listening to and complying with your doctor and other health professionals, and coming back to work as soon as possible are other key things that will help."

While Neil heads up the Workers’ Compensation and Injury Management team, also on board are Martine McMahon and two new faces, Elana Strickland and Sheree Yorke.

“As a team we are committed to helping you return to work and recover to the level you were before your injury, or if this is not possible, to being the best you can be,” Neil said.

What WCIM recommends you can do if sick and injured:

- Keep in touch with your workmates.
- Talk to your manager and DFES Injury Management Consultants about alternative suitable duties if your doctor assesses you as partially fit to return to work.
- The WCIM team can also liaise with some volunteer employers.
- Stay active and connected with your community by continuing with your usual activities as much as possible.
- Accept appropriate help from family and friends as this makes the helper feel good as well.
- Stay focused on what you can do, rather than what you cannot.

Three eagerly awaited fire appliances arrived in the Shire of Quairading recently and the fleet is now in good shape for the coming season.

A group of keen local volunteer Bush Fire Brigade firefighters got together for the official handover, electing to have a barbecue and make a real celebration of it.

Area Officer Lower Wheatbelt Torben Benstien attended to deliver the keys to local Chief Bush Fire Control Officer (CBFCO) Clive Hawlesley.

"The identical 4.4 Broadacres have four wheel drive capability and a 4,000 litre water tank, and were handed over to the South Quairading, Doodenannying and Wamenusking volunteer Bush Fire Brigades," Torben said.

"As a farmer response registered brigade, Wamenusking did not have a fire appliance. Their brand new Broadacres vehicle now carries three crew members and provides increased firefighting capability."

"The replacement Broadacre for the South Quairading and Doodenannying brigades were a welcome upgrade."

Cyclops keeps a close eye on HAZMAT incidents

HAZMAT Incident Controllers will be better able to assess and manage chemical spills and fires with the introduction of a live video streaming capability direct from incident scenes.

Acting Manager CBER Hazmat Jason Paul said many benefits will result from this addition to HAZMAT resources.

“Prior to the introduction of Cyclops, the HAZMAT team have been dependent on live video from incident scenes, but Cyclops adds to incident appreciation and awareness for the HAZMAT team when they are consulting on significant incidents, by streaming live imagery directly to the State and Regional Operations Centres.

“It makes real time viewing of details like the colour of smoke, identification of UN chemical numbers and labels possible. This type of information is invaluable as it can offer vital clues on the best and safest way to combat HAZMAT incidents.”

Jason added that each new camera will be stored on the Field Liaison Officer vehicle and will be available for use at incidents without delay.

“As Quairading CBFCO, Clive Hawlesley was instrumental in seeking the improved firefighting resources and said the Shire now had one of the most up to date fire appliance fleets in the State.

“We have been supplied with the capability to perform effective fire suppression and this will definitely benefit the local community,” he said.

Clive also noted the efforts of Torben Benstien of the DFES Northam Office and said his role in helping to highlight the need for the appliances on a risk to resource basis was greatly appreciated.
Young girl’s initiative brings praise

Quick thinking and a keen sense of responsibility saw young Genevieve Grier act quickly to protect her brother during a fire in the kitchen of their home.

“Feeling heat from the gas, he moved suddenly and a tea towel fell on to the flame. It began to burn and produced a fair amount of smoke that filled the kitchen area,” Ian said.

“Genevieve reacted by grabbing the phone and straight away escorting her brother outside to safety before calling triple zero and asking for the fire brigade.”

“Feeling heat from the gas, he moved suddenly and a tea towel fell on to the flame. It began to burn and produced a fair amount of smoke that filled the kitchen area.”

“Genevieve acted in an emergency situation was exceptional and ensured that both she and her brother were unharmed.”

“Ian considered Genevieve’s actions were worthy of recognition and she was recently surprised by the Murdoch fire crew who paid her a visit at school. “It was a pleasure to present Genevieve with a DFES Certificate of Appreciation in front of her teacher, pupils and family,” Ian said.

“The composed and sensible way that Genevieve acted in an emergency situation was exceptional and ensured that both she and her brother were unharmed.”

International recognition for USAR personnel

Six local Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Taskforce team members have been officially acknowledged for their role in the 2011 Christchurch earthquake response.

New Zealand High Commissioner to Australia Martin Dunne visited Perth in July and presented citations to personnel who assisted with recovery in the aftermath of the quake.

“We are very grateful to the Taskforce team members from Western Australia for their efforts in Christchurch. They performed their role with exemplary professionalism and at a challenging time and place,” Martin Dunne said.

“After the Christchurch earthquake, the New Zealand High Commissioner presented a Visit Letter of Appreciation to New Zealand High Commissioner Ronald Radford and 100 New Zealand Disaster Response Team personnel who supported their peers in Christchurch, Queenstown and Wellington,” Wayne Gregson said.

“The presence of the New Zealand High Commissioner to Australia highlights the significance of this international accolade,” Commissioner Gregson said.

“The award ceremony honoured their commitment, compassion and dedication to the arduous work they undertook during a period of incredible devastation.”

“On their deployment, the six USAR team members from Western Australia operated in tough, physically and mentally challenging conditions. They worked alongside structural engineers, geologists, construction workers and demolition experts, the team undertook a range of activities while maintaining a state of preparedness to respond to further aftershocks.”

Their role involved searching for missing people, conducting primary and secondary risk assessments of structures, and assisting Police to retrieve personal belongings from damaged buildings.

Juvenile and Family Fire Awareness (JAFFA) Support Officers got together with DFES staff recently to further develop their skills, exchange ideas and share information.

Attendees at the 2013 JAFFA Forum heard presentations from experts on areas of interest, including the treatment of juvenile fire setters and working with indigenous youth and families.

“By building a rapport with young people and their families, and taking the time to explain the consequences of fire, JAFFA volunteers help to deter juveniles from future fire setting,” Ruth said.

“The forum provides an ideal avenue for the volunteer’s program to educate their knowledge and energy to this important service contributes to community safety.”

“The award ceremony honoured their commitment, compassion and dedication to the arduous work they undertook during a period of incredible devastation.”

“The composed and sensible way that Genevieve acted in an emergency situation was exceptional and ensured that both she and her brother were unharmed.”

“Intervening early in a child’s experimentation with fire, and providing them with an understanding of how fire behaves and what the potential consequences are, has huge benefits,” Ruth said.

“Research has shown that programs like JAFFA help to prevent child injury and death from fire, as well as reduce the cost of property damage.”

“Firefighters are perceived by our community as the most trusted and qualified source to deliver fire safety and education information, and our group of dedicated volunteers are key to the program’s success.”

“In fact, Western Australia runs the only program of its type in the nation to be presented by both career and volunteer firefighters on a voluntary basis.”

The JAFFA program was started in 1989 by a group of firefighters led by then District Officer Edie Brooks. It was formed in response to requests from parents, mainly mums, coming to the fire station for help with their sons who had engaged in fire lighting.

Arson is an issue of national concern and Australia’s most costly crime, with bushfire arson alone costing an estimated $1.6 billion each year.

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JAFFA volunteer team commended for effort

In addition to recognising years of service ranging from five to 20 years, a `Making a Difference’ award was made this year.

Senior Firefighter Stuart Parks was the recipient and congratulations go to him for his excellent contribution to the JAFFA Program.

A grateful parent wrote the following about Stuart’s positive impact on his family;

Stuart was wonderful. He quickly built a rapport with my children, explaining things really well. He was very approachable and a great support. We learnt a lot from Stuart. Thank you.

The JAFFA program was started in 1989 by a group of firefighters led by then District Officer Edie Brooks. It was formed in response to requests from parents, mainly mums, coming to the fire station for help with their sons who had engaged in fire lighting.

Arson is an issue of national concern and Australia’s most costly crime, with bushfire arson alone costing an estimated $1.6 billion each year.
The Aurora project developed in Western Australia is the country’s first bushfire spread prediction system. Recently it was recognised with a prestigious national iAward in the 2013 Regional Category, having already won the WA Society Domain Award and WA Information Technology and Telecommunications Award (WAITA).

Developed over the past three years, Aurora utilises the University of Western Australia’s Australis bushfire simulator software, Landgate’s remote sensing capabilities, and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) bushfire management expertise.

Manager Environmental Protection Ralph Smith said Aurora was a user-friendly web based system that could operate within the mapping environment of fire agencies.

“Aurora provides an early warning tool for emergency services in regional and remote areas to significantly minimise the impact of bushfire on communities,” Ralph said.

“It can accurately predict and simulate a bushfire in near real time, including direction, intensity and rate of spread, using either satellite derived fire hotspots or defined ignition points.

“Custom fire spread simulations can be run by defining ignition points identified by DFES with forecast or custom weather, and fuel inputs.

“Incident Controllers can overlay the bushfire spread simulations on other GIS datasets to provide a more comprehensive bushfire situational analysis and identification of a range of community values.”

Ralph acknowledged the staff within the Environmental Protection branch who had contributed to the project.

Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner Wayne Gregson congratulated DFES Project Leader Ralph Smith on completion of the Aurora project, and its recent award wins.

“All of the Aurora partners can be proud of their achievements in developing this innovative system for bushfires and for their commitment to the project,” Commissioner Gregson said.

“Predicting probable fire spread in advance will be of great benefit to Incident Controllers in a number of key ways, including efficient and accurate deployment of resources. Importantly, it will mean enhanced protection for firefighters and the community.

“Reducing the complexity of fire behaviour analysis can ultimately change the face of fire management in Australia.”

Aurora was applied to the Avon Valley bushfire earlier this year and will be utilised over the 2013/14 bushfire season.

The Aurora project was funded by the Federal Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, with in kind support from each partner agency.

Although farmers and other members of the community had been involved in fighting fires in the Bullsbrook area since the 1930s, the original Bush Fire Brigade (BFB) was officially formed in 1953.

It began through recognition by landowners and residents of the danger of bushfires, and the need to protect their farms, homes and sheds.

They utilised wet bags, rakes and back-burning, tractors and even ploughs, graduating to equipment like pumps, tankers and old armed forces trucks. Continuing on, the brigade sourced and upgraded pumps and vehicles to provide a critical service for the community. Bullsbrook’s first vehicle was purchased using donations from members who also housed equipment at their own properties for many years.

In 2010 the brigade became a VFS unit and with the change of function came structural firefighting and road crash rescue capabilities. This reflected the growth of the area and the changing demands on the brigade.

Bullsbrook Captain Georgia Johnson said the 60 year milestone was an ideal time to reflect back on the brigade’s history and evolution.

“It is incredible to think how hard it must have been battling fires with only basic gear and a handful of determined people,” she said.

“Firefighting has come a long way, and we are fortunate that today we have access to the latest vehicles and equipment, including digitally operated radio communication systems.

“We currently have 53 committed members in the brigade, including several new recruits who are undertaking training.

“With four light tankers, a 3.4 urban tanker and a 7.2 bulk water tanker at our disposal, we respond to bushfires, structure fires and Hazmat incidents both within and outside the district, as well as road crash rescue incidents.”

Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner Wayne Gregson congratulated former and current members involved in the development of Bullsbrook VFS.

“The Brigade was born through volunteer ingenuity and perseverance, and continues to provide a critical service today,” Commissioner Gregson said.

“To sustain such devotion for six decades is remarkable and a credit to all who have served.

“DFES is proud of its volunteers and the valued support shown to the community by the Bullsbrook VFS is an example to all.”

North East District Officer Craig Garrett said the local fire district covers approximately 35,000 hectares of grassland, native bush reserves, pine and native forests, national parks, urban, rural and semi-rural subdivisions, plus major rail and highway infrastructure.

“Within its boundaries there are two completely different land forms, both of which present challenges to firefighters,” Craig said.

“Sand and swamp mark the western part, while to the east is the Darling Scarp area with its steep hills and gullies.

“Throughout its history, Bullsbrook fire crews have had to battle a number of large fires and earlier this year they were mobilised to help suppress a significant bushfire at Shady Hills.”
Service of Thanksgiving

The Department of Fire and Emergency Services will be hosting a special Thanksgiving Prayer Service at St George’s Cathedral in the city on the evening of Sunday 6 October 2013. It is being held in recognition and appreciation of the vital role that Western Australian fire and emergency services play in protecting local communities.

The service will be multi-denominational and a unique opportunity for everybody involved in the State’s emergency services to join together and give thanks.

# Date: Sunday 6 October 2013
# Time: 5pm – 6pm followed by a light supper
# Location: St George’s Cathedral, 38 St Georges Terrace Perth
# Dress: Dress uniform or smart casual required
# RSVP: 23 September 2013 rsvp@dfes.wa.gov.au Phone 9395 9520

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

2013 Queen’s Birthday Honours List

The 2013 Queen’s Birthday Honours List included Western Australian recipients of the prestigious Australian Fire Service Medal (AFSM) and Emergency Services Medal (ESM). Both recognise distinguished service by volunteer or career members of an Australian fire or emergency service.

Congratulations go to Joseph Taylor, a dedicated volunteer with the State Emergency Service for almost 30 years, who was named as receiving the ESM.

Joseph has demonstrated exceptional leadership in emergency services. He is known and respected for the great rapport he has established with fellow volunteers. Joseph is also skilled in being able to resolve complex incidents and has made an outstanding contribution to the Emergency Services Cadet Corps.

This well deserved honour is testament to Joseph’s achievements and his steadfast commitment to the community.

Congratulations also go to Metropolitan Chief Superintendent Gary Kennedy, recipient of the AFSM.

Gary has been a firefighter and officer for more than 33 years. During this period he has gained a reputation as an exceptional commander of major emergencies. As a result, Gary has managed many significant metropolitan and country fires, and natural hazard incidents that posed great risk to both life and property.

In addition to Gary’s impressive leadership and mentoring abilities he has been involved in projects across a wide range of areas that have been of great benefit to the fire and emergency services, as well as the wider community. This medal is testament to his accomplishments, exemplary service and outstanding contribution.

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AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Service and dedication to community highlighted

Firefighters and emergency services personnel past and present were honoured at a prestigious ceremony at Government House Ballroom in Perth recently.

They received National Medals and Clasps for long and diligent service to the community, with several qualifying for the Emergency Services Diligent Service Medal along with a number of DFES corporate staff.

Twenty WA Fire and Rescue Service firefighters who have hung up their tunics and retired, were also acknowledged for their loyal and devoted service.

Two late Senior Firefighters, Mark Claffey and Gregory Nicolay, who sadly passed away in 2012, received special mention. Family members attended on their behalf to proudly accept certificates and plaques for their respective 25 and 24 year service.

They were joined by Retired Firefighter Ross Lister, District Officer Allen Gale, Senior Firefighter Brett Burgess. They received their 2nd Clasp to the National Medal for an exceptional 35 years of service, while Ross was also presented with his 35 year Emergency Services Diligent Service Medal.

Emergency Services Minister Joe Francis was on hand to make the presentations and congratulated all recipients for their great work serving the people of Western Australia.

“The 119 firefighters and emergency services personnel recognised today have, between them, provided an amazing 2,800 years of service,” Mr Francis said.

“Many personnel have put themselves in danger, sacrificed time with their families, and taken on the responsibility of keeping people safe during life threatening emergencies.

“Whether on the frontline or behind the scenes, each recipient has contributed an enormous amount, and many have devoted several decades to the community. They deserve our gratitude and admiration for such a fine effort.”
**AWARDS AND RECOGNITION**

In Memoriam

Sincere condolences go to the family, friends and colleagues of these personnel who have passed away.

Allen Liddle – Member Southern Cross Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service
Wayne Middleton – Member Merredin Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service
Mike Munro – Member Pert Denison Volunteer Marine Rescue Service
Bob Wissenbach – Member West Pilbara Volunteer Sea Search and Rescue

**2013 ANZAC Day March**

Superintendent Special Operations Regiment Bruce Jones leads the DFES contingent of Fire and Rescue Service and State Emergency Service personnel as they head down St George’s Terrace, Perth on the 2013 ANZAC Day march.

Photos courtesy of Matt Hayes.

**Denmark cadets and leader seize the day**

The scenic Great Southern town of Denmark can lay claim to a thriving Emergency Services Cadet Corps (ESCC) of 33 members aged between 12 and 17 years.

Cadet Leader Nathan Hall, who is also the local Community Emergency Services Manager, guides the unit of 25 boys and eight girls.

In a classic case of ‘give a busy person a job to do’, Nathan who is husband to very understanding wife Kyra and father to 15 month old daughter Kalea, also finds time to volunteer for four different emergency services.

These include the Bush Fire Brigade (BFB) where he has spent a total of 15 years, Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service (VFRS) 14 years, State Emergency Service (SES) more than two years, and St John Ambulance for over a year.

Nathan explains that his first encounter with volunteering was 24 years ago, when he was living in Roleystone.

“Our neighbour was in the local bush fire brigade and my parents became members,” he said.

“I roped several good mates in to join up and it became an enjoyable activity I could do with friends. I soon came to realise the importance that volunteers play in the community, and the skills and training you can receive by dedicating some of your time and commitment.

“In Denmark, like many other regional towns across the State, there is a heavy reliance on volunteers.

- With fewer new recruits coming on board, it is vital that young people are encouraged to become cadets. Hopefully they will then graduate through to adult volunteering.

“Have we already had some success, with three former cadets going on to join the Denmark VFRS and SES, and Ocean Beach BFB.”

Nathan said the experience, leadership ability and confidence gained during his own time as a volunteer had equipped him for his work and cadet unit roles.

“I started the Denmark ESCC just over two years ago,” he said. “Since then great links have been developed with the VFRS, SES and Volunteer Marine Rescue Service, all of whom provide training for the cadets. In addition a number of BFB members also regularly assist them with training and activities.

“Wearing the cadet uniform and attending community events like the ANZAC Day parade also gives them a feeling of belonging and responsibility.”

Nathan added that it was important to get the parents involved too.

“We keep them advised by sending home newsletters and inviting families to attend award ceremonies,” he said.

“You normally get some great feedback from parents on how the cadets are progressing at home and what skills, like fire safety, they have remembered and passed on to their families.”

Nathan acknowledged Denmark High School, DFES, Cadets WA and the Denmark Shire for supporting the emergency services cadets.

“The excellent assistance provided by our group of supporters has helped us build a strong, successful and vibrant cadet unit,” he said.

“This was borne out when Denmark High School was chosen as the 2012 DFES host school and the Cadet Unit named a category winner in the 2012 Resilient Australia Awards.”

**YOUTH**

“Having the opportunity to complete senior first aid certificates and skippers tickets also motivates them to complete their training courses.

“The camps are always fun events and something the cadets really look forward to and tell their friends about, which results in more students joining.

“Wearing the cadet uniform and attending community events like the ANZAC Day parade also gives them a feeling of belonging and responsibility.”

Nathan said the cadets get a lot out of belonging to the unit, including increased confidence, gaining life skills and making good friends.

“We try to keep unit members interested by having at least one emergency service appliance available at every training meeting, and offering the right mixture of theory and practical activities,” he said.

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“In a small rural town it is amazing just how much time some people are willing to give to the cadets to help them along. I feel the more involvement the unit has with these local emergency services, the stronger it will be.”

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Tom Price cadets step in to help out

As Tropical Cyclone Rusty threatened the Pilbara region earlier this year, it was a matter of all hands on sandbags for 30 Tom Price Senior High School emergency services cadets.

Gathering at the local State Emergency Service (SES) unit, the group soon became proficient at filling the hessian bags, guided by their cadet instructors.

Around 400 sandbags were then distributed to local community members and businesses to ensure they were ready in case of any flooding.

Emergency Services Cadets from Tom Price Senior High School get into the swing of filling sandbags, guided by Instructor Simon Davidson.

While on site, the cadets also took the opportunity to help prepare and stock SES storm damage rescue trailers.

Tom Price Cadet Leader Nicole Kelly said it was great that the large contingent of young people had volunteered their personal time in this way.

“Tom Price cadets step in to help out”

“It was wonderful to see the cadets doing their bit for the people of Tom Price,” Nicole said.

“They are a fine cadet unit and have proven their dedication to the community many times in the past.”

Northampton cadets visit big smoke

Each year a group of emergency services cadets from Northampton in the Midwest Gascoyne region travel more than 470 kilometres down to Perth to experience a packed program of activities.

Visits often take in a fire station, the WA Fire and Emergency Services Training Academy or DFES Education and Heritage Centre, and a social outing to the Perth Royal Show which is always a winner.

Cadet Leader Hayley Baikie, who is a former emergency services cadet, said the 15 current members were from several local schools including Northampton District High School, St Marys, Geraldton Senior College and Nagle Private School.

“The Northampton cadets are an enthusiastic bunch from Years 6 to 12 who are interested and excited to learn,” Hayley said.

“The unit has developed a terrific association with the Northampton Volunteer Fire Service (VFS) whose members take the time to demonstrate road crash rescue and firefighting techniques, as well as point out the finer points of fire appliances.

“Five cadets have moved through into the adult VFS in recent years, which has been really positive for the brigade and community.

“On our annual trip south in 2012 we stopped off at Perth Fire Station where the cadets had the chance to talk to firefighters and get some hands on experience with hoses, while also checking out the fire appliances and other equipment.

“This year cadets from the unit are really looking forward to visiting the RAC Rescue base in Jandakot and meeting crew members.”