As we embark on another year that is sure to be as busy and demanding as the last, it is a good time to reflect on all that we achieved together in 2009.

We were faced with many challenges, especially towards the end of the year, with a number of significant bushfires and a category 5 tropical cyclone. I am pleased to say that we met those challenges head on and I am extremely proud of everyone involved.

The major bushfires that ripped through the Wheatbelt towns of Toodyay and Badgingarra saw the biggest losses of homes caused by a bushfire in Western Australia in close to 50 years.

The fact that there were no lives lost during these major incidents speaks volumes about the skill and professionalism of everyone involved. It also highlights the changes in attitude and better community awareness about bushfires since the Victorian bushfires that claimed 173 lives.

It is hard to believe it has been one year since the tragic Black Saturday event, however FESA and other fire management agencies have made great strides in the management of bushfires since that time.

Revised arrangements for bushfire advice and alerts have been implemented. These include a new national approach to community education focusing on bushfire ‘Prepare. Act. Survive.’, a revised fire danger rating system and a new scaled community warning system for use by all fire agencies.

There have also been a number of recent legislation changes to the Bushfires Act 1954, including the introduction of total fire bans and new arrangements for the control of major bushfires and public information. These changes strengthen FESA’s coordination and management of bushfires in WA and support the organisation’s role of building a safer community.

The first cyclone of the season also delivered a knockout blow during the festive season. Tropical Cyclone Laurence, which threatened the North West coast just before Christmas, caused significant damage after crossing the coast twice as a category 5 system.

The StateAlert community warning system was activated for the first time during Laurence with great success, warning the community of Derby to prepare for Red Alert as Laurence bore down on them.

Fortunately it missed major population centres but the cyclone did cause destruction to isolated communities, particularly at Eighty Mile Beach between Port Hedland and Broome. The response by all personnel was magnificent and I thank those who worked so hard before and after the cyclone hit.

2009 was a year of achievement for the organisation, including the reopening of FESA’s Education and Heritage Centre following a $1.6 million refurbishment. There has been a steady stream of people of all ages flooding through the doors to learn more about our state’s emergency services.

The centre also supports FESA’s role in providing community safety information through interactive exhibits, an internet kiosk and take home resources on all hazards from bush and structure fires to storms, search and rescue, cyclones, tsunami and earthquakes.

Last year saw FESA’s State Emergency Service celebrate a half century of service to the Western Australian community. It was a great opportunity to acknowledge the fact that these volunteers have helped out during the state’s biggest natural disasters and emergencies over the past 50 years, including Cyclone Vance, the Moora floods, Meckering earthquake and Dwellingup bushfire.

Congratulations to all SES volunteers for such a wonderful achievement.

I would like to thank our many volunteer and career personnel and corporate staff for the countless hours they spent coming to the aid of thousands of people in need of emergency assistance throughout 2009.

This year I am sure we can look forward to achieving many new goals and embracing more opportunities to improve the services we offer.

The next few months can be a challenging time for our emergency services personnel with the possibility of more significant bushfires and cyclones, but I know you are well prepared. I wish you all a safe and rewarding 2010.

Jo Harrison-Ward,
Chief Executive Officer
PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE.
this bushfire season

A new national bushfire strategy ‘PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE.’ is being used to help people understand the risk of bushfires and to prepare, be aware of warnings and activate their bushfire survival plans at the first sign of danger.

PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE. represents the three key points people living in bushfire prone areas need to remember.

Chief Operations Officer Craig Hynes said whether people choose to leave for a safer place or shelter in a well prepared and defendable home, preparation is the key to survival.

“Prepare means people living in bushfire prone areas need to decide what they will do to keep themselves safe and to prepare their homes regardless of whether they plan to leave for a safer place or actively defend their home,” he said.

“People also need to act according to the fire danger rating. Homes are not likely to offer protection from a fire front on a catastrophic fire danger day.

“The strategy encourages people to gather as much information about a fire as possible so they can respond quickly and appropriately. It also highlights that people should not wait for an emergency warning before activating their bushfire survival plan.

“Survival and safety depends on the decisions people make before and during a fire. Messages include telling people in bushfire prone areas that the safest place to be is away from the fire and that defending a home may be one of the most traumatic experiences they will ever have.”

Materials that support PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE. have been produced to assist people in developing their own bushfire survival plan. These are available on the FESA website with downloadable resources for use at a local level.

The StateAlert emergency warning system had its first public activation on 16 December 2009 with a warning to the community of Derby which was facing the destructive winds of Tropical Cyclone Laurence. More than 5400 messages were sent in a five minute period to residents advising them that a Red Alert warning would be issued at 9pm that evening.

Since this first activation, StateAlert has been used on a further nine occasions to send out emergency warnings about bushfires threatening communities. These major incidents included bushfires at Toodyay, Brigadoon and Moore River National Park.

StateAlert Project Manager Mike Klenner said incident controllers could request an alert by calling the dedicated StateAlert line on 1300 566 588.

“StateAlert will only be used when the hazard management agency determines it is necessary or for life threatening situations where there is sufficient time to send a warning,” Mike said.

“As the StateAlert warning is only an advisory message, individuals still need to look after their own safety. It is important that they keep a watch on weather conditions, go to the FESA website, listen to ABC updates and look out for smoke or other indicators in their area.”

Mike added that StateAlert was only one of a number of methods used by FESA to get information to the public in times of danger.

StateAlert also has an opt-in feature where people can register to receive alerts via email and RSS feed for up to three different addresses.

For further information or to register for StateAlert, head to the website at: www.statealert.wa.gov.au
Fire Danger Rating wheel gets revamp

Black Saturday, hotter summers and more severe bushfires across Australia have led to an improvement in the Fire Danger Rating (FDR) system.

A National Bushfire Taskforce looked at how the FDR could be changed to represent the increasing number of devastating fires where the fire danger index (FDI) was in excess of 100.

After consultation between fire agencies and market research, it was agreed to combine the low and moderate ratings to make room for two additional categories – severe and catastrophic.

The fire danger ‘wheel’ (MacArthur Scale) has been altered to include these two new ratings at the upper end of the scale. To help people understand what the categories mean, messages have been developed for each FDR describing how a fire may behave and what damage it could cause.

Chief Operations Officer Craig Hynes said previously the highest category was extreme and it covered any FDI above 50.

“The introduction of the severe rating provides a progressive scale of fire danger, while the tragic circumstances of Black Saturday in Victoria last year demonstrated the need to include a rating that could represent the very worst of conditions,” he said.

“The Australian standard for home construction in bushfire prone areas will not withstand the types of fires that are likely to burn once the FDI is 100 or higher, so the category of catastrophic was included.

“People in bushfire prone areas need to understand that even well constructed, well prepared and actively defended homes may not survive a fire in this range, and that the safest place for them is away from the fire.

“There is now general consistency with all states and fire agencies using the category names and colours. In WA, however, we use the grassland fire danger index exclusively, and the FDI for high and very high is slightly different.”

Craig added that the Bureau of Meteorology will continue to issue fire danger warnings but they will include forecasts for catastrophic, extreme and severe fire conditions.

“The forecasts and accompanying action statements will give people in bushfire prone areas a better understanding of what actions they need to take to survive a fire and to be prepared,” he said.

“The changes provide people with more information in an easy to understand format so they can take action to survive.

“A program to replace road signage is also being developed in partnership with local governments. It is likely to occur progressively over the next 12 months due to the size of the state and the number of shires, towns and cities.”

Code of conduct clarifies expectations

A code of conduct has been developed which outlines FESA’s values and how employees, volunteers, contractors and others involved in the organisation can work together to ensure the workplace is a positive and productive environment.

Launching the code, Chief Executive Officer Jo Harrison-Ward said she was very pleased with the way the ‘FESA family’ worked closely together.

“FESA’s future success hinges on our dedicated team of valued staff and volunteers, and the way we work together,” Jo said.

“The code helps us by setting goals to work towards and providing standards to enhance a safe and healthy working environment.

“It also highlights and reflects the ethics and values that underpin the organisation.

“We all have a role to play in the way we treat each other and this code shows how these key values can easily translate into actions between colleagues and the community.”

Jo said the code of conduct addressed three areas - respect for people, acting with integrity and working within the rules.

“Safeguarding the WA community does require dedication, commitment, honesty, respect and integrity,” she said.

“It’s important that we all recognise these fundamental values and behaviours, and incorporate them in the way we do business every day.”

The code of conduct is available on the FESA Intranet.
One public information system for all

FESA has reviewed its public information system following recommendations from the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission. While our system already included many of the recommendations, changes have been made to bring WA in line with a nationally agreed system.

This three level system will be used by all agencies that manage fire including FESA, Department of Environment and Conservation and Local Governments.

A/Director Media and Public Affairs Michelle Harris said the system emphasised the increasing risk to lives as a fire progresses and time until impact decreases.

“The national agreement formalises the process already used by FESA during the past two bushfire and cyclone seasons and includes issuing an advice, watch and act, or emergency warning based on the intensity and location of the fire,” she said.

“An advice will be issued for fires where there is no threat to lives or property but there is smoke near homes. It will outline where the fire is, who is attending and simple actions people should take.

“Advices will be sent for fires that start in populated areas where there is heightened community concern, but not necessarily for every bushfire.

“A watch and act message tells people that a potentially threatening fire is approaching them. It provides information about changing conditions and the need for residents to start taking action to protect themselves and their families.”

Michelle said an emergency warning will be issued when immediate life saving action needs to be taken.

“Incident Controllers will be responsible for authorising the use of the Standard Emergency Warning Signal (SEWS) at the start of emergency warnings,” she said.

“The sound is used to grab people’s attention and make them tune in to the emergency information that follows the use of SEWS.

“Emergency warnings with SEWS are used for life threatening situations and immediate danger. However, we need to be mindful not to overuse it as it could then become meaningless.”

FESA provides community warnings for significant incidents in several ways, in an effort to reach the most people as quickly as possible. These can include:

- ABC emergency broadcasts at quarter to and quarter past the hour (we recommend everyone has a battery operated radio that is capable of picking up their local ABC station).
- Messages on the FESA information line 1300 657 209.
- Alerts on the website at www.fesa.wa.gov.au
- News bulletins on radio and TV and articles online and in print (information is provided to all media outlets including regional FM stations).
- Call centre (as required – number is advertised on information line when active).
- TV crawler messages when a threat to life is imminent.
- StateAlert emergency warning system.
- Emergency personnel on the ground provide advice direct to community members at risk.
- Community meetings.
- In some areas emergency services also have access to loud hailsers.

Helicopter support for bushfires

WA’s aerial firefighting fleet for the 2009-10 bushfire season includes two Type 1 helicopters, four helitacs and an air intelligence helicopter operated by FESA. In addition, there are eight fixed wing aircraft operated by both FESA and the Department of Environment and Conservation.

Emergency Services Minister Rob Johnson said the Government had invested $6.5million this season to ensure that Western Australia had one of the best aerial firefighting fleets at its disposal.

“The Government is committed to supporting fire crews and protecting the community from bushfires,” he said.

“We have joined forces with the Federal Government to boost the state’s aerial firefighting resources with additional funding for a second Type 1 water bombing helicopter.

“The Type 1 is capable of dropping nearly 4000 litres of water and can carry up to 15 firefighters with their equipment.

“This is the first time that we have had two Type 1 water bombers based in WA.

“This type of aircraft has a proven track record in our state, having flown nearly 100 successful missions in the last two seasons.”

While a Type 1 chopper is based in Perth, the second operates out of Busselton to protect lives and property in the highly vulnerable South West region.
FESA’s briefing to a range of key stakeholders gathered at Challenge Stadium prior to season 2009-10, emphasised that Western Australia was well prepared to deal with bushfires and severe tropical cyclones.

While there was a major focus on weather predictions and conditions, a diversity of speakers from WA and interstate presented on topics of vital interest. Westplan Bushfire and Westplan Cyclone, major fire control arrangements, scaled community warnings, StateAlert, emergency management and recovery arrangements, and media response, were just a few of the many areas highlighted.

The audience included more than 160 representatives from local, state and federal government departments, the Bureau of Meteorology, Water Corporation, Western Power, members of State Emergency Management Committees, FESA staff and volunteers from across the board, as well as Bushfire Ready volunteers.

Delivering the opening address, Chief Executive Officer Jo Harrison-Ward said FESA was committed to boosting community safety.

“We are supporting our firefighters and emergency services personnel to ensure they are well resourced and equipped to handle any major incidents wherever they occur in the state,” she said.

“FESA and the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) have been working together for some time to determine the potential bushfire and cyclone risk to WA communities.”

Turning to predictions for the coming season, Jo said it was likely to be a testing time for all, with a busy bushfire and cyclone season ahead.

“An event like today is important to those involved in emergency response,” she said. “It gives everyone the opportunity to share knowledge and experience and most importantly, to be briefed on the latest information.”

Chief Operations Officer Craig Hynes said FESA had taken steps to ensure that the organisation was ready for whatever the coming season might bring.

“FESA has already hosted a Bushfire Forum and Summit that drew together all of the state’s key stakeholders to discuss a diversity of fire management issues,” he said.

“This latest briefing is another way to communicate with those on the ground about the recent significant changes to bushfire education and incident response.”

Craig added that pre-season cyclone briefings had taken place in the North West to raise awareness about the risks associated with cyclones and encourage residents to be prepared.

“Key audiences were the media, industry and the community throughout the Pilbara and Kimberley,” he said.

“Comprehensive briefings were conducted on a regional tour by BoM representatives who worked in conjunction with both FESA Community Engagement and regional staff.”
FESA’s emergency management extranet provides practitioners working in the field with a single point for online information and resources relevant to Western Australia.

Developed by Emergency Management Western Australia (EMWA), the site provides the following functions:

- A range of information libraries including:
  - Legislation
  - Policies and procedures
  - Westplans
  - Guides and information sheets
  - Presentations
  - Local Arrangements
  - Exercises
  - Lessons learnt
- Emergency Management Committee information and secure workspaces
- Online business planning and annual reporting for all EM committees
- Key contacts search
- Information on state and national program working groups.

EMWA Principal Policy and Planning Officer Darryl Ott said registration to the EM Extranet was free and could be completed online by following the link from the FESA website.

“There has been significant interest in the extranet across the sector, with more than 400 registrations since its inception,” Darryl said.

Once you have been given access to the EM Extranet you will receive a user name and password, usually within three working days. For more information contact Madeleine Ellis or Darryl Ott on 9489 3200.

A comprehensive volunteer recruitment action handbook has been published to help FESA brigades, groups and units achieve greater success in attracting new members.

Project Manager Merveen Cross said the ideas in the book can be adapted and used in response to individual recruitment needs.

“Pingelly State Emergency Service (SES) and Gingin Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service initially assessed the handbook utilising two different recruitment action plans,” she said.

“As a result of that process, the Gingin brigade has recruited additional members and Pingelly SES is progressing with their long term strategies.

“For ease of accessibility the handbook can be provided in hard copy, on a CD in Word format or downloaded from the FESA Volunteer Extranet.”

A grant from the National Emergency Volunteer Support Fund 2008-09 was the key source of funding for the project which included:

- a research report
- printing of 500 handbooks
- 500 CDs
- creation of seven individual “Are You Ready” volunteer service banners

Database records will be kept of volunteers who access the resource over the first year and they will be invited to evaluate the process to identify:

- what action plans were utilised
- what recruitment strategies worked and why
- what recruitment strategies didn’t work and why
- further improvements required to assist volunteer recruiting

The idea for the handbook originated at a 2007 Volunteer Issues Forum in Busselton where specific volunteer recruitment issues were identified, taking into account demographic factors and requirements in coastal towns, mining based towns and fly in fly out communities.

A key outcome was the need to address volunteer recruitment and targeting of new volunteer members, with feedback revealing that requirements differed significantly across the state.

Merveen said the research element of the handbook project was led by Dr Judy Esmond, with the aim of developing a best practice model for WA.

“Representatives from both urban and rural based brigades, groups and units across the spectrum of FESA’s volunteer services were included,” Merveen said.

“Indications are that the handbook will be a very useful tool for both recruiting and retaining new members. A feedback mechanism has been included to assist with evaluation.

“The opportunity was also taken to showcase the new handbook at the Volunteer Management Sub Group meeting of the Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Council (AFAC) last November. This gave colleague agencies in other states and New Zealand the opportunity to examine a valuable local resource.”
Refurbished Education and Heritage Centre welcomes visitors

Executive Director Dave Caporn said the centre located in Western Australia’s first purpose built fire station now represented the whole FESA family.

“This wonderful heritage listed building showcases the collective efforts of generations of firefighters and emergency services volunteers whose dedication and commitment have made, and continue to make, our communities safer,” Dave said.

“It is a great place for people to visit and learn more about our state’s emergency services and the range of hazards and emergencies we face.

“It also reflects on the important contribution the traditional landowners of Western Australia have made to the fire and emergency services since the 1800s, a contribution that continues today.”

Director Community Engagement Suellen Shea said the two storey centre provided a wonderful link between past and present emergency services.

“The appliance room and dedicated fire services heritage gallery present a nostalgic look at the WA Fire and Rescue Service, while the upper gallery is all about modern museum learning,” she said.

“The area provides informative and interactive exhibits on all hazards and emergencies faced in Western Australia, from bush and structure fires to storms, search and rescue, cyclones, tsunami and earthquakes.

“This year the wind and earth natural hazards exhibits will be designed and installed, completing the community hazard education gallery.

“The centre also supports FESA’s role in providing community safety information to the public through an internet kiosk, interactive hazards map and take home resources.”

Suellen added that the project had taken the best part of six years to complete and FESA was very happy with the exhibition themes and interior design.

“It’s particularly satisfying to know that the building will continue to be an important part of Perth’s educational, social and architectural heritage into the future,” she said.

Two new school curriculum programs introducing all the operational services of FESA also coincided with the launch (Emergency Services in the Community and Me).

Schools programs set to be launched in 2010 are part of The Wild West program series: Bushfire and My Community and Understanding and Preparing for a Tropical Cyclone.

Manager Fire and Emergency Services Education and Heritage Centre Su Ferreira said the facility had proven extremely popular with visitors of all ages since it re-opened late last year.

“Although only open 18 hours a week, close to 5000 visitors have passed through the doors, 1000 of which were school children,” she said.

“The other visitor demographics comprised local families, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups, seniors, special needs groups and many interstate and international tourists.”

Suellen was keen to recognise the many dedicated people who had played a crucial role in getting the new centre up and running.
FESA’s Education and Heritage Centre has reopened following a $1.6 million refurbishment.

“The project has involved wide collaboration from volunteers, designers, architects, curriculum experts, scientific organisations and researchers,” she said.

“Organisations such as the Attorney General’s Department have assisted FESA with funding, and we also received support from the Bureau of Meteorology, Geoscience and the Curriculum Council.

“The efforts of the FESA Community Engagement team and the Centre and Vintage Fleet volunteers in particular have been outstanding.

“Opening of the Centre would also not have been possible without the enthusiasm and commitment of our new volunteer service delivery team. We are fortunate to have this exceptional group offering a professional customer service to our visitors.”

Two long serving volunteers who had generously devoted their services to the previous museum over several decades, the late George and Pam Stewart, were honoured at the opening celebration. The couple’s musician grandchildren were on hand for the occasion, performing keyboard and drums.

Emergency Services Minister Rob Johnson, assisted by CEO Jo Harrison-Ward, cuts a ribbon to mark the official opening of the FESA Education and Heritage Centre.
**GENERAL NEWS**

**Mains powered smoke alarms compulsory**

As of 1 October 2009, Western Australia’s building regulations changed to require all homes that are rented and sold to have mains powered smoke alarms installed.

The alarms must be fitted in all existing residential buildings prior to sale and at the time a new tenancy agreement is signed for rental properties. If there are no tenancy changes in rental properties, mains powered smoke alarms must be fitted by 1 October 2011.

Manager Built Environment Terry Jackson said that since 1 July 1997 it has been mandatory for all newly constructed houses, or those undergoing major renovations, to have smoke alarms.

“The new laws are designed to reduce the likelihood of people being injured or dying in house fires,” he said.

“Responsibility for having a licensed electrical contractor to install mains powered smoke alarms rests with the building owner.

“Local Government officers can inspect homes and issue a rectification or infringement notice, or prosecute for any breaches with a fine of up to $5000.

“This change affects investors, as they will need to have smoke alarms installed in their rented homes within two weeks of a new tenant moving in.”

Terry said research had shown that working smoke alarms can save lives.

“Mains powered photo electric smoke alarms with a fixed rechargeable battery that doesn’t need to be changed for the life of the smoke alarm are best,” he said.

“Where there are no hidden spaces in a building to conceal the necessary electrical wiring or where mains power supply is not available, the regulations permit installation of a smoke alarm with a 10 year long life battery that cannot be removed.”

Terry added that regulations affecting bed and breakfast establishments, small hostels and boarding houses differed in that smoke alarms were required in all bedrooms.

FESA has undertaken a comprehensive community and industry awareness program to highlight the new smoke alarm regulations.

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**Hills residents get proactive**

FESA’s winter burning project moved further ahead when staff and volunteers conducted demonstrations for residents in the Perth Hills area prior to the bushfire season.

Manager Bush Fire and Environmental Protection Branch (BF&EPB) Ralph Smith said participants were split into small groups and taken through the process of preparing for and conducting a prescribed burn.

“Residents were advised of the best burning period for Mundaring and many took up the option to safely reduce the fuel around their properties well before the start of the summer bushfire season,” Ralph said.

Ralph explained that an assessment of properties affected by the Parkerville bushfires had been undertaken by BF&EPB staff in January 2008.

“It established that fuel loads were generally high on private properties, however many residents lacked the knowledge or confidence to do prescribed burning during the winter months,” he said.

“Specific criteria was developed for these types of burns to be undertaken by landowners with limited bushfire knowledge and experience, and several initial trial burns were conducted on properties in Mundaring Shire.

“The details were recorded and last year a guide for landowners and an informative DVD were published based on this research. The items outline the process for safely planning and conducting a prescribed burn in the cooler months and were distributed to residents in and around the Perth Hills.

“The aim was to increase the amount of prescribed burning on small forested properties under five hectares in size, reduce fuel levels and mitigate the potential impact of bushfires on the community.

“BF&EPB has recently expanded the project to include Lower Chittering and in 2010 winter burning guide booklets will be developed for a number of other areas in the south of the state.”

The guide booklet specifies the following simple burn parameters:

- Burn an area between 50m² and 200m².
- Light the burn after 3pm.
- Burn when the wind speed is between 12 and 19 kilometres per hour.
- Burn against the wind with a backing fire.
- Burn between five and 10 days after rain.
- Do not burn when the sky is hazy or a haze alert has been issued.
- Wear appropriate protective clothing.
- Determine the burn boundary and where appropriate establish breaks at least one metre wide.
- Light the fire with a single ignition point.

Ralph added that by adhering to these parameters, residents could safely and effectively conduct a prescribed burn and have it self extinguish by 6:30pm the same day.

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Perth Hills residents are shown how to properly undertake a controlled winter burn.
Communities prepare for bushfire season

Training for Bushfire Ready program facilitators took place in Gidgegannup and Serpentine-Jarrahdale ahead of the 2009-10 bushfire season.

Manager Community Safety Vivienne Gardiner said the community action program encouraged local residents to work together to prepare their properties and protect their families against bushfire.

“Bushfire Ready Groups are supported by their brigades, local government and FESA,” Vivienne said.

“The one day training sessions were facilitated by Community Safety Coordinators and District Managers, and hosted by the local Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade and local government.

“Twenty-two volunteers attended who wanted to become facilitators and establish Bushfire Ready Groups in their community. Several existing and experienced facilitators also took advantage of the opportunity to refresh their skills.

“Participants gained an overview of the Bushfire Ready training package used to engage the community in awareness raising activities and develop skills in facilitating community based activities.

Bushfire Ready training group. District Manager Stuart Wade addresses attendees at Bushfire Ready facilitator training in Serpentine-Jarrahdale.

“Facilitators are encouraged to draw on personal knowledge of their local community and environment, as well as their own networks and bushfire knowledge.”

District Manager Syd Bignell who helped facilitate the training in Gidgegannup, said program facilitators would receive ongoing support and development through Community Engagement and Operations as well as from local governments.

“Communication with the facilitators is important so that they are continually updated with the latest information, including the changes resulting from the Victorian bushfires,” he said.

District Manager Stuart Wade who helped facilitate the training in Serpentine-Jarrahdale, said the program empowered the local community to develop a range of strategies to enhance its resilience to bushfire.

“Bushfire Ready is an effective way to educate the community because it connects residents and neighbours with volunteers and other bushfire stakeholders who have local knowledge,” he said.

If you want to become involved in Bushfire Ready please contact FESA Community Engagement on (08) 9323 9816.

Dunsborough Expo showcases local emergency services

FESA was well represented at the Shire of Busselton’s pre-summer Emergency Services Expo in Dunsborough.

The event was supported by 18 South West Bush Fire and Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service brigades, representatives from local Bushfire Ready groups and volunteers from the State Emergency Service and Marine Rescue Service. Others in attendance were St John Ambulance, Department of Environment and Conservation and WA Police.

Busselton Community Fire Manager Andy Thompson said the Expo provided a great platform for South West emergency services, including Shire of Busselton Rangers, to meet people from the region prior to the start of the busy bushfire season.

“We joined forces to demonstrate to the community the diverse range of activities that local emergency services are involved in and how they work together,” Andy said.

“Two demonstrations were highlights, one being a road crash rescue scenario performed by Dunsborough Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service with support from St John Ambulance personnel. The other was a roof taping demonstration by volunteers from the Busselton SES Unit.

“Local Bush Fire Brigades and Bushfire Ready groups also got the chance to raise awareness about the bushfire risk and highlight the importance of residents preparing their families and properties for the upcoming season.

“Yallingup Bushfire Ready Facilitator Annie Palmer spent the day linking community members with their local brigades. She encouraged them to join Bushfire Ready and prepare their homes and bushfire survival plans.

“It was also good to hear that many of the brigades recruited several new members on the day.

“It’s rewarding to see the Expo growing each year, with more groups becoming involved and an increase in visitors.”
Firefighters save dozens of homes in Wheatbelt inferno

Tuesday 29 December will remain etched in the memory of those affected by the devastating bushfire that impacted the Wheatbelt town of Toodyay.

The firestorm erupted in 44 degree heat with intense flames up to three metres high fanned by winds of more than 40 kilometres per hour.

The fast moving blaze destroyed 38 homes, three holiday cottages and 20 sheds, killed 100 sheep and turned 2900 hectares of bush and vegetation into ashes.

In addition, three homes were partially burnt and farm machinery was damaged, along with kilometres of fencing. The end result was an estimated $100 million damage and the largest loss of homes caused by a bushfire in Western Australia in close to 50 years.

Although many homes were razed that afternoon and four people sustained injuries, including a resident who was taken to hospital with burns and three firefighters affected by heat exhaustion or smoke inhalation, there were no lives lost.

Chief Operations Officer Craig Hynes said the fact that residents survived this major bushfire was testament to the extraordinary efforts of the Incident Management Team (IMT), career and volunteer firefighters on the ground, and those involved in aerial operations.

“The professional way that this fire was managed and extinguished meant that dozens of homes were saved,” Craig said.

“It was devastating for all the families involved, but I think in the main people did heed FESA’s advice and left their homes instead of staying to tackle the inferno.”

Complex fire

The fire, which started in the Avon Valley near River Road, was reported just before 1pm on 29 December 2009. The strong winds and extreme temperature saw it quickly get out of control.

Incident Controller Mark Bowen said when crews arrived at the scene the fire was roaring up the valley towards homes at 10 kilometres per hour.

“We could see burning embers starting spot fires up to four kilometres ahead of the main blaze,” Mark said.

“There were a number of frantic triple zero calls coming in and our immediate priority was saving lives and asset protection.

“It was a complex incident and some of the challenges we faced were the extreme geographical features such as steep hills and the high fuel loads. At one point the fire was also heading straight for a large housing subdivision, with the potential of trapping many people in their homes.”

Mark said that Toodyay Shire initially managed the fire.

“When statewide coordination of resources became imperative, Section 13A of the Bushfires Act was implemented, giving control to FESA,” he said.

“The transition was relatively seamless because of our experience with previous large fires in the Shire.”

Operational management

Mark said one of the best things he did was appoint a Deputy Incident Controller and Deputy Operations Officer.

“In addition to extinguishing the fire, there were many aspects of the incident to manage including public information, road closures and establishing relocation points and safety routes,” he said.

“The demands on the Operations Officer were also huge in terms of deployment, juggling the units on the fire ground, directing air operations, helping trapped residents and trying to contain the fire.

“Many residents were well prepared, but some property owners could have done more. There was vegetation growing up against homes and narrow winding
driveways lined with trees which made it very difficult to protect some homes.

“The crews did a tremendous job working in such terrain and severe conditions.”

**Outstanding fire effort**

More than 200 personnel from the career and volunteer Fire and Rescue Service, Bush Fire Service and Department of Environment and Conservation, along with local people operating private firefighting units, worked through the night to contain the fire.

They were supported by the FESA aerial intelligence helicopter and an air attack supervisor, two Type 1 helicopters, two helitacs and two fixed wing water bombers.

Air Operations Manager Peter Saint said the helicopters and fixed wing aircraft protected ground crews as they battled to save assets and infrastructure.

“The atmosphere was thick with smoke and there were a number of communications towers in the area,” Peter said. “They constituted substantial high risk hazards for the aircraft, which still managed to do an incredible job in arduous conditions.

“The air fleet stayed in town overnight so that support was available to ground crews at first light the next day.

“A steady stream of locals kept coming up to say how grateful they were for everyone’s contribution to the firefighting effort. Toodyay Shire CEO Graham Merrick particularly commented on the valuable work of the air fleet.”

**Incident information paramount**

FESA’s Media and Public Affairs (MPA) team issued a total of 15 public information bulletins throughout the incident, including emergency warnings.

Craig said this was thanks to vital information provided from the fire ground by the IMT.

“Incident Controller Mark Bowen provided MPA with information about the direction and speed of the fire, and the streets it was about to impact,” he said.

“People were also advised that leaving early was their best chance of survival and how to get to the relocation points set up at the Toodyay Town Hall, Toodyay Sports Oval and Northam Recreation Centre.

“There is no doubt this information saved lives and I urge all incident controllers to follow his example and make it a top priority at significant fires.”

Craig added that StateAlert was used at Toodyay for the first time during a bushfire in WA to warn hundreds of residents about the immediate threat to lives and homes.

It was also the first time the Standard Emergency Warning Signal (SEWS) was used in the state for a bushfire.

“Since the Victorian bushfires our world has changed - community information has become a primary incident management tool,” he said.

**Community re-groups**

A community meeting was held on 30 December at the Toodyay Town Hall, where around 300 residents learned the full extent of the devastation.

Premier Colin Barnett and Emergency Services Minister Rob Johnson, accompanied by Craig Hynes and
Mark Bowen, surveyed the damage and offered assistance.

Mark said the meetings were well received and a great way to distribute information to those affected.

“We informed people about containment strategies and when people could return home,” he said.

“We also brought in other Government agencies such as Department for Child Protection and Western Power, which meant people could ask questions about emergency accommodation and power.”

At the meeting Colin Barnett praised people for leaving early and thanked emergency services personnel for their hard work.

The crowd gave a heartfelt round of applause for the hundreds of firefighters, State Emergency Service volunteers and other emergency services personnel who assisted.

Mr Barnett said the incident was a natural disaster and offered people who lost their homes and possessions up to $3000 in immediate assistance.

The Federal Government also pledged assistance for fire victims through access to personal hardship and distress grants.

In the days that followed, the Urban Search and Rescue team assessed the fire damage and carried out a risk evaluation of the affected area.

FESA was assisted at the incident by the Shire of Toodyay, Department of Environment and Conservation, WA Police, the Department for Child Protection, Department of Agriculture, Water Corporation, Energy Safety, Telstra, Western Power, Salvation Army and Red Cross, which worked round the clock to minimise the impact on the community.

Western Australians and people across the nation have dug deep to help Toodyay residents rebuild their lives, pledging more than $1 million to a number of appeals.

“The crowd gave a heartfelt round of applause for the hundreds of firefighters, State Emergency Service volunteers and other emergency services personnel who assisted.”
While no one was injured or any homes destroyed, flames reaching higher than roof tops scorched more than 8500 hectares of bush on the Marchagee Track, 10 kilometres east of the Brand Highway. FESA Incident Controller Steve McDonald said firefighters worked incredibly well in the catastrophic conditions.

“The fire danger index peaked at 122 and we were battling against 60 kilometre per hour gusts in 43.5 degree heat,” he said.

“The conditions were horrific for firefighting and this blaze definitely had the potential to run on. Despite this, there was no loss of life.”

Steve said high praise was due to more than 150 firefighters who worked solidly for two days until the All Clear was issued around 10.30am on 31 December.

“Career staff, Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service and Bush Fire Service volunteer firefighters, Department of Environment and Conservation crews and local farm units, all did an outstanding job,” he said.

“In particular, the willingness of volunteers to assist and protect their communities at this time of need was fantastic.”

Steve said although no farmhouses were lost, crops and land were burnt on twelve farming properties, with two farms severely affected.

“Two farm sheds were destroyed along with machinery, vintage tractors, vehicles, a farm response unit and approximately 150 kilometres of fencing,” he said. “There were also a number of livestock losses.

“In addition, around 468 hectares of Sandalwood plantation was burnt out at an estimated cost of $1.6 million.”

Ground crews were supported by three fixed wing water bombers and heavy machinery including two dozers, three loaders, four graders and shire equipment from Coorow and Dandaragan.

Western Power, WA Police and the Departments for Child Protection and Local Government, worked with FESA and were instrumental in helping the community get back on its feet.

FESA's Media and Public Affairs team issued 10 public information bulletins, including emergency warnings, about the threat to lives and homes.

Six local residents initially gathered at the relocation point organised at the Badgingarra Recreation Centre, but opted to stay with family and friends overnight.

A recovery meeting was held a few days later where people were told state and federal government funding was available as the bushfire had been declared a natural disaster.

The cause of the fire was due to heat transfer from a vehicle to crop and stubble.

On the morning of the fire, the Shire had issued a harvest ban forbidding people from moving machinery in paddocks.

FESA is currently reviewing the incident and consulting with local brigades.

Scorched earth surrounds this rural property.

Choking smoke blankets the area. Photo courtesy The West Australian.
Broome bushfire diary

A bushfire that started in a parking bay 10 kilometres east of Broome on 11 October 2009 destroyed 69000 hectares of bushland. It eventually joined up with fires further to the north and east of Broome, burning through a total of some 600000 hectares of the West Kimberley over three weeks. Only one major loss of infrastructure was reported – a large hayshed and contents valued at $300000.

Area Manager West Kimberley
Lee Vallance describes the incident as it unfolded.

Day 1
Crews contained the blaze fairly quickly within graded firebreaks on Roebuck Plains Station. They continued to mop up and patrol the perimeter into the evening.

Day 2
Conditions deteriorated very rapidly, with the temperature reaching 40 degrees and relative humidity dropping to 4 percent, making the fuel very dry. By 10am winds of up to 50 kilometres an hour had fanned embers from the fire and blown them across containment lines. Volunteers from the local Broome Bush Fire Brigade (BFB) responded in four appliances. That afternoon the call went out for more assistance. The response involved a total of 24 firefighters from Broome’s BFB, Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service, Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) Kimberley and the Broome Aviation Fire Service. Volunteers from Broome State Emergency Service also helped out.

Two FESA Fire Service managers from Broome were dealing with four separate fires along the Broome Highway with crews and five fire appliances. Later that afternoon the fire jumped the highway to the north and threatened the rural subdivision of 12 Mile comprising 50 hobby farms.

Fire crews went into asset protection mode as the five kilometre wide fire front steamrolled towards the community. Residents were extinguishing spot fires while firefighters worked alongside. The crews successfully back burned, guiding the fire to the north.

Although by this stage the fire had grown to approximately 10000 hectares, there were no major losses or injury. Due to smoke and fire conditions along Broome Highway, road blocks were manned by police, effectively preventing road access into Broome.

People on the western side were able to head back to town and those stranded on the eastern side utilised the services of the roadhouse at Roebuck.

Others who remained were supplied with drinking water and communications.

The roads were closed for most of the day and opened for short periods when conditions allowed, with traffic escorted by fire appliances.

Day 3
Conditions were similar, with strong easterly winds pushing fire back towards Broome and the coastal community of Coconut Wells, 20 kilometres north of Broome.

Approximately 30 firefighters from local services were involved in the fire effort at this time. Crews again went into asset protection mode with firefighters battling many large fire fronts, in some cases at the back doors of a number of multimillion dollar rural properties overlooking Cable Beach.

FESA fire managers from Kununurra and Karratha were flown in to bolster the Incident Management Team (IMT) established in the Broome Regional Operations Centre (ROC).

Helicopter reconnaissance was carried out and fire crews on the ground were directed to identified hotspots and properties under threat. The fire was split into four sectors, with fire crews carrying out firefighting and blacking out operations.

Relief firefighting crews comprising both career and volunteer personnel and IMT managers from Perth were put on standby for deployment to Broome.

Day 4
Fire crews arrived from Perth to assist local brigades in combating the fire. There was thick fog in the morning and the relative humidity reached 100 percent, only to plummet to as low as four percent by noon. The temperature also soared to 40 degrees
New crews were moved to different sectors where career and volunteer firefighters worked together in very trying conditions. Hydration and sun protection were key factors taken into account, along with other occupational health and safety provisions.

Control of the fire was handed over from Local Government to FESA due to the amount of resources and crews on the ground, with Broome Shire still playing an important role in the management of the fire.

Firefighters also had to contend with at least one arsonist continually lighting a fire in different locations well away from the main fire. This meant crews were called away to deal with these smaller deliberately lit fires.

Many millions of dollars of housing and infrastructure were saved, while the blaze continued without any reported injuries or major loss of assets. Again, local roads were closed intermittently throughout the day as conditions necessitated. By now the bushfire had burnt up to 20000 hectares.

**Days 5 – 8**

With firefighting operations and the IMT in Broome ROC now running 24/7, extra crews from Perth were flown in to relieve weary firefighters on the ground. Rotation of crews involved a mix of both career and volunteer firefighters from the local area and Perth to provide local knowledge and expertise.

Fire activity was monitored throughout the day and blacking out and mopping up occurred during the night.

**Day 9**

The fire threatened the Roebuck Roadhouse and destroyed a large hay shed on Roebuck Plains Pastoral Station at a loss of $300000, but it did present a chance to stop the fire continuing to the south. Fire breaks were consolidated all day at the station using heavy earth moving machinery. This allowed back burning operations during the evening. To contain the fires, 28 kilometres of back burning was implemented through the use of a trailer based flame thrower unit, drip torches and incendiaries from a helicopter. These methods helped to break up the head fire and change the fire behaviour to successfully contain the blaze on Roebuck Plains Station.

**Personnel and appliances**

A total of 89 personnel were involved in the extended fire operation. This included 17 FESA managers, two District Support Officers, 10 career Fire and Rescue Service firefighters, 14 Bush Fire Service volunteers and Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service firefighters from Perth, three Department of Environment and Conservation firefighters, 35 Broome Bush Fire Brigade and Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service firefighters and State Emergency Service volunteers, plus eight Aviation Firefighters. Nine fire appliances were utilised, ranging from light tankers to 9000 litre heavy pumpers.
OPERATIONAL INCIDENTS

South West brigades battle Gnarabup/Prevelly blaze

South West fire crews from the Shire of Augusta-Margaret River turned out to their first major bushfire of the season at 3pm on Saturday 24 October 2009. The blaze is believed to have been sparked when a private burnoff in Rainbow Cave Road, Margaret River, got out of control.

Shire Operations Officer Gordon Temby said the bushfire was pushed along by strong easterly winds.

“The fire burnt through approximately 350 hectares of bushland and endangered the coastal communities of Gnarabup and Prevelly, west of Margaret River,” Gordon said.

“Due to inaccessible terrain it was only possible to mount a direct attack on the fire after it had travelled two kilometres through the Leeuwin Naturaliste National Park to the outskirts of the Gnarabup and Prevelly townsites.

“Running fire lasted from approximately 3pm to midnight on the first day and it came close to neighbouring properties in both areas.

“Numerous residents and tourists chose to relocate to a welfare centre in Margaret River during the incident.

“Crews worked hard to prevent the fire front and ensuing ember attacks from impacting around 300 houses in both townsites.

“Firefighters spent day two undertaking edging and backburning operations, securing containment lines and monitoring for any hop overs.”

Gordon said local government handed management of the fire over to DEC at 4am on Monday 26 October.

“Two fixed wing water bombers were brought in to help extinguish flare ups, assisted by a fixed wing Air Intelligence plane, a spotter aircraft and a DEC helicopter,” he said.

“Ongoing work following the fire involved the burning out of unburnt pockets and continuous monitoring.”

A total of 200 emergency services personnel were involved in the fire effort, including 10 volunteer Bush Fire Brigade (BFB) crews from the Shire of Augusta-Margaret River, three volunteer BFB firefighters from the Shire of Busselton, firefighters from Margaret River and Augusta Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service and DEC crews and appliances.
The Great Southern town of Dumbleyung was thrust into the spotlight recently when a storm roared through causing damage in excess of $1.5 million.

FESA State Emergency Service (SES) in the region answered numerous requests for help, with callouts mainly involving fallen trees and roof, wall and chimney damage.

The storm blew in late on the afternoon of 9 February. It hit with ferocity, lifting off half the roof of the main Dumbleyung Primary School building, and depositing debris in the quadrangle and even further afield.

The town’s historic watering hole was also impacted, with the storm tearing the upstairs verandah of the Tavern loose from its fittings and causing it to collapse in the powerful winds.

The Dumbleyung Ski Club on the banks of the local lake was not spared either. The building was uprooted from its foundations, blown a number of metres uphill and then wrapped around a tree.

SES crews assessed damage to 30 buildings in Dumbleyung. By the end of the second day, the hardworking volunteers from Albany and Narrogin had completed temporary repairs to all but two of the more seriously affected properties.

Members of the town’s Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service (VFRS) also assisted with the response effort, which started with their own building. During the storm’s onslaught, the station engine room roller doors were blown in and damaged beyond repair.

District Manager Gary Logan said the operational and recovery phases involved four FESA managers from Albany and Perth, SES volunteers from Albany and Narrogin, Dumbleyung VFRS, the Shire of Dumbleyung and the local Bush Fire Brigade captain, together with representatives from the Department of Housing and Works, Western Power and Telstra.

“Emergency services personnel also included local volunteer bush fire brigade volunteers who were kept busy putting out fires sparked by the lightning,” Gary said.

“To put the storm into perspective, approximately 60 percent of the Dumbleyung area experienced some form of damage, and this was a significant impact on the community.

“It was really pleasing to see the high level of cooperation as services worked together to assist people in their time of need.”
As the rest of WA prepared for Christmas, people in parts of the Kimberley and Pilbara were advised by FESA State Emergency Service (SES) to move immediately to the strongest, safest part of their shelter as Severe Tropical Cyclone Laurence bore down on them.

While it missed major population centres, Laurence caused significant damage to isolated communities, particularly at Eighty Mile Beach between Port Hedland and Broome.

Assistant Chief Operations Officer Gary Gifford said more than 150 SES volunteers and FESA staff from the Kimberley, Pilbara and metropolitan regions worked tirelessly over 14 days to keep the community safe and help those affected.

“This was the most intense cyclone to impact WA since Tropical Cyclone George in 2007,” Gary said.

“It caused significant damage to isolated communities along the coast, but volunteers and staff did an incredible job helping them prepare and coming to their assistance after impact.”

Chief Executive Officer Jo Harrison-Ward also praised the many SES volunteers and career staff for their hard work.

“The dedication to helping those affected has been fantastic and I’d like to say well done to everyone involved,” Jo said.

The system forms
Laurence formed off the Darwin coast in the Timor Sea on 8 December. The small but intense cyclone skirted the Kimberley coast reaching category 5 just north east of Derby on 16 December.

With the Bureau of Meteorology predicting an impact at Derby, the Broome Regional Operations Centre was staffed with a round the clock Incident Management Team (IMT).

A Major Emergency Team (MET) consisting of FESA managers, Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) and SES volunteers, was deployed to the headquarters to support local staff and volunteers.

Koolan and Cockatoo Islands were placed on Red Alert and the first ever StateAlert was issued to warn people in Derby that they would be placed on Red Alert before it crossed the coast near Koolan Island as a category 4 system.

Kimberley Regional Director Rob Cox said StateAlert worked extremely well.

“More than 5400 people in Derby were immediately notified that they were going to be placed on Red Alert at 9pm,” Rob said. “It was quite late in the evening, so this was an extremely effective way to warn them of the imminent danger.”

There were no reports of damage as Laurence crossed the coast for the first time. The SES advised people in the north and west Kimberley to prepare for possible flooding after 200 millimetres fell in 24 hours across some areas.

Meanwhile Laurence moved south west over land, past Derby. It weakened to below cyclone intensity, but quickly regained cyclone strength after reaching open waters just north of Broome.

Rob said Broome was forced to go to Yellow Alert for the first time since Tropical Cyclone Rosita in 2000, when Laurence passed within 50 kilometres of Broome.

“There were around a dozen calls for SES assistance after strong winds and heavy rain caused minor damage to homes and uprooted trees,” he said.

In the days that followed, Laurence steadily intensified to a category 5 as it continued to track south southeast towards the east Pilbara coast.

With a severe coastal crossing imminent just north of the Pilbara region, SES volunteers were placed on standby and a second MET consisting of FESA staff and volunteers was flown into the Pilbara Regional Operations Centre, which then took over operational control of the incident.

Laurence hits
Eighty Mile Beach Caravan Park, Wallal Station and Mandora Station bore the worst of the onslaught as the eye of the category 5 cyclone passed directly over them, late in the afternoon on 21 December.
Fierce winds and torrential rain from the first tropical cyclone of the season caused destruction in the state's North West after crossing the coast twice as a category 5 system.

Pilbara Regional Director John Winton said destructive winds, horizontal rain and flooding caused by Laurence left a swathe of destruction in its path.

“The sheer strength of the wind, which reached up to 285 kilometres per hour, demolished buildings, damaged telecommunications and killed hundreds of cattle,” John said.

“At Eighty Mile Beach Caravan Park, the cafeteria where eight people sheltered was the only building left standing.

“At Wallal Station destructive winds overturned a cattle truck and obliterated all of the outbuildings and sheds and the same damage was seen at Mandora Station.

“Further inland, buildings at Sandfire Roadhouse and Yarrie homestead suffered minor damage.

“Fortunately no one was injured, but it may have been a different story if the cyclone had crossed in a highly populated area.

“As it stands, the damage bill is estimated to be around $10 million due to structure and infrastructure losses.”

Help at hand

John said a strike team comprising of USAR, SES volunteers, police and paramedics was deployed in three helicopters to assist those affected and inspect the damage.

A further 30 SES volunteers from Port Hedland, Newman and Broome were mobilised to help local communities with the cleanup effort. The Department of Defence Norforce Broome also assisted.

They were supported by SES volunteers from metropolitan units and IMTs from the Pilbara and Kimberley.

As Laurence continued to track south east, the Parnngurr Aboriginal Community at Cotton Creek was put on Red Alert and FESA developed a contingency plan to evacuate 65 people by helicopter.

That plan was cancelled when Laurence weakened and continued to head towards the Northern Territory border.

As cleanup efforts got underway, FESA declared Laurence a natural disaster under the WA Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements.

Laurence went on to cause havoc for the north western half of New South Wales. A natural disaster was declared there after heavy rains associated with the ex-tropical cyclone isolated around 300 properties and forced around 400 people to relocate.
The VMRWA conference was opened by Emergency Services Minister Rob Johnson and included presentations from FESA VMRS Training Section and Professional Standards Directorate. Representatives from key state government agencies including the Department of Transport, WA Police and the Bureau of Meteorology, also shared information and networked with delegates from across the state.

“Effective planning for the future will enable the VMRS to maintain its high standard of service in dealing with emergencies, which is why gatherings like the VMRWA Conference are so important,” Mr Johnson said.

“Through a unified approach to emergency management and response we can all continue to build on WA’s marine rescue capability.

“In Western Australia we are very fortunate to have more than 1300 marine rescue volunteers protecting locals and visitors along the state’s vast 12000 kilometre coastline.

“Marine rescue volunteers constantly brave treacherous conditions to search for lost vessels and people, conduct rescues and tow vessels back to safety. Their dedication means they also put in thousands of hours monitoring the movement of recreational vessels and undertaking training.

“The life saving role of 33 VMRWA groups carries significant responsibilities and demands high performance standards and strong community links. Without doubt our community is better prepared and safer because of their extraordinary commitment.”

Last year marine rescue volunteers responded to more than twenty incidents a week. This equated to almost 19000 hours preparing for and responding to calls for help.

Outstanding Marine Rescue Volunteers awarded

During the conference dinner VMRWA Awards were presented to groups and individual volunteers.

When handing out the awards Mr Johnson noted that the skills, knowledge and experience that recipients brought to the VMRS were invaluable.

“The contribution and leadership of marine volunteers serves to inspire others and build community confidence,” he said.

“Warm congratulations to all the winners and a sincere thank you on behalf of the people of Western Australia.”
Volunteer Marine Rescue Western Australia (VMRWA) have held their fifth Annual Conference and Awards ceremony. It was preceded by a Volunteer Marine Rescue Service (VMRS) Commanders Forum that focused on strategic direction and provided a general exchange of ideas.

Winners of the 2009 VMRS Youth Achievement Award, Mandurah Water Rescue – back (l-r): Cadet Instructors Fiona Douglas and James Searle; Cadets James Knock, Michael Knock; and instructor John Palmer. Front: Cadets Rhys Nancarrow; Haydon Searle; and Cameron Spalding.

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Key VMRS achievements in the past year

- New dedicated rescue vessels located at Augusta Sea Rescue (10 metre Naiad) and Peaceful Bay Sea Rescue (8.5 metre Naiad).
- New vessel builds for Port Walcott, Onslow, Denmark, Lancelin and Windy Harbour are well under way with a launch date early in 2010.
- Refits have been completed on the Kalbarri and the Esperance rescue vessels.
- Building improvements:
  - Naturaliste Volunteer Sea Rescue building and training room extensions are now complete.
  - Port Walcott Sea Search and Rescue building is finished and operational.
  - Derby Volunteer Marine Rescue has completed their operations building to lockup and are now planning the second stage of their project. This involves relocation from the town jetty to a new purpose built operational headquarters facility adjacent to the ramp.
  - East Kimberley Volunteer Sea Rescue group is under way with managing their new operations centre adjacent to the Wyndham launching ramp.
- Funding grants for electronic equipment, marine radios, motors, safety gear and operations centre equipment have also been distributed.

Winners:

- Department for Planning & Infrastructure Award for Marine Safety
  - Busselton Volunteer Sea Rescue Group
- FESA Volunteer Marine Rescue Services, Youth Achievement Award
  - The Cadet Team, Mandurah Water Rescue Group
- VMRWA Award for Excellence in Volunteer Marine Rescue Services – Group Operations
  - Albany Sea Rescue Squad
- FESA Volunteer Marine Rescue Services Outstanding Member Award
  - Bradley Dean of Port Walcott Sea Search and Rescue Group
- Paul Kimber Award for Excellence in Volunteer Marine Rescue Services
  - Peaceful Bay Sea Rescue Group

Port Walcott Sea Search and Rescue Group volunteer Bradley Dean, winner of the Outstanding Member Award with President VMRWA Roger Martin (centre back) and Emergency Services Minister Rob Johnson.
AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Celebrating the 2009 Volunteer Emergency Service Awards

Western Australia currently has 16 Volunteer Emergency Service (VES) units and eight Volunteer Fire Service (VFS) brigades, all established in the last seven years to support the State’s emergency service capability.

Speaking at the annual VES Awards ceremony, Emergency Services Minister Rob Johnson said it was pleasing to see numbers continuing to grow, especially in some of the more remote areas.

“We welcomed our most recent VES unit in Hopetoun earlier this year and now have almost 800 VFS and VES volunteers located across the state,” Mr Johnson said.

“In a life threatening accident every second counts and to save lives it is crucial that the nearest community responds.

“Volunteers play an important role in making our communities a safer place.

“They are a very special breed, never hesitating to help others in distress, operating at all hours and in harsh locations. Time after time they put their lives on the line for our protection.

“Knowing they are there ready to respond provides enormous comfort and relief to those in need.”

Mr Johnson said when fire destroyed Fitzroy Crossing’s supermarket in July 2009, local volunteers did more than quickly bring the fire under control.

“They played a key role in helping to extinguish the fire, removing decaying food items and later organising a barbecue to thank community members for assisting in the clean up,” he said.

“This is only one example of the wonderful work that volunteers do and our communities are very proud of their achievements.

“Standing behind our local heroes are family members and their employers, and they also deserve a vote of thanks for their steadfast support.

“My congratulations go not only to those VES and VFS members who have been nominated for an award, but to the entire service of dedicated volunteers who do such an incredible job to ensure the safety of our citizens.

“Thank you all for making such a valuable contribution to our state.”

Posthumous honour for the late JAMES REGAN

SES volunteer James Regan has been posthumously awarded the Commendation for Brave Conduct as part of the Australian Bravery Decorations Honours list.

A volunteer with Newman State Emergency Service, James was nominated for his involvement in the rescue of an injured tourist from the foot of Hancock Gorge in Karijini National Park on 2 April 2004.

During the rescue a flash flood swept though the Gorge, washing the casualty and rescue team downstream. Tragically, James lost his life during this incident.

Chief Executive Officer Jo Harrison-Ward said that James would always be remembered by those in the FESA family.

“The unquestionable loyalty and devotion to duty exemplified by James has been recognised through the awarding of this great honour,” Jo said.
SES fifty years

The 50th anniversary of the State Emergency Service in Western Australia was celebrated during National SES Week 2009. It was a time for reflection and pride for past and present SES volunteers, their families and employers.
Acknowledging the extraordinary commitment made by State Emergancy Service volunteers to their community and the state, FESA Chief Executive Officer Jo Harrison-Ward said the service was very highly valued.

“The time, training and personal sacrifice so willingly given by SES volunteers over half a century is of enormous benefit to the community,” Jo said.

“These dedicated men and women can be counted upon to be there when needed at floods, cyclones, storms, searches and cliff rescues, as well as road crash rescues in certain parts of the state. They also provide assistance at significant incidents in specialist areas like communications, logistics and air search.

“Appreciation goes to all SES volunteers and a vote of thanks also to their families and employers for lending them such fantastic support.”

Looking back...

Australia’s Civil Defence Service had its beginnings in 1936 when Commonwealth and State Ministers agreed that key personnel would be trained in preparation for possible gas attacks and also provide equipment, manuals, technical information and advice.

During World War II many Australians were volunteers, appointed as air raid wardens by the National Emergency Services. They monitored air raid security and breaches of blackout regulations. In cities and towns around the country, evacuation procedures were planned and practised.

After the war, around the late 1940s, the Commonwealth reactivated the Civil Defence Service. During the 1950s the states accepted responsibility for civil defence organisations, with each having a headquarters and volunteer units at local government level.

The SES was formed in 1959 for the purpose of coping with civil disaster, including fires, floods, cyclones, railway accidents, crashed aircraft, explosions and the search for lost persons.

In 1961 the SES was amalgamated with the Civil Defence Organisation and became known as the Civil Defence and Emergency Service of Western Australia. This followed a Royal Commission on bushfires and a government review into ways to combat cyclones and floods.

The organisation was renamed the Western Australian State Emergency Service in 1974. Their headquarters was located at the ‘Bunker’ in Belmont, with SES units also located at Westrail and the Swan Brewery.

SES units were known as Local Volunteer Emergency Services Units, but by the end of the seventies they were referred to as State Emergency Service Units.

The SES has at various times come under the auspices of the WA Police and other government departments. Since 1999 it has been an integral part of the Fire and Emergency Services Authority.

A history of the SES in WA is being compiled and is due for completion this year.
The outstanding efforts and achievements of Western Australia’s State Emergency Service (SES) volunteers were recognised at the annual SES Awards. The awards carried added meaning as they also celebrated a half century of service by the SES to the Western Australian community.

A crowd of more than 400 guests comprising finalists, volunteers, family, friends and staff, gathered in Burswood’s Grand Ballroom to celebrate the SES Awards. The evening ceremony was also attended by Emergency Services Minister Rob Johnson.

Hosted once again by Master of Ceremonies and Perth radio personality Graham Mabury, the SES Awards celebrations began with a comprehensive action packed video introducing the nine finalists and highlighting many incidents attended by SES volunteers throughout the year.

Awards finalists had travelled from both metropolitan and regional WA, and were shortlisted from an outstanding 28 nominations. As in previous years, the standard of entries was exceptionally high. Chief Executive Officer Jo Harrison-Ward commended SES volunteers past and present for their commitment to making WA a safer place for all. She said the awards provided a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the past 50 years of SES history.

“Over the past five decades thousands of SES volunteers have stepped up and answered Western Australia’s cry for help during and after many natural disasters and emergencies,” Jo said.

“The dedication, commitment and enthusiasm of SES volunteers are traits that have remained at the forefront over the years.”

Peter Keillor Award
Presented to a volunteer who has gone beyond the call of duty in demonstrating a high level of dedication and commitment to the SES, this award was won by Sergio ‘Sarge’ Bottacin.

A member of Northam SES and the Designated Training Manager for the Northam District, Sarge has been a volunteer since 1987. He was nominated by members of Moora SES for his tireless dedication to training in the region.

Team Achievement Award
This award, won by the SES Communications Support Unit (CSU), recognises the outstanding efforts of a unit or team who has initiated a new idea, worked collectively to achieve outstanding results in a particular area or undertaken a community awareness project.

The CSU provides statewide communications advice and support for SES units and other government agencies during emergencies. The unit was nominated for developing a training package for FESA’s Western Australian Emergency Radio Network (WAERN), which will assist improvements to communication capabilities during times of need.

Youth Achievement Award
Presented to an SES volunteer aged 25 years or younger. Keaton Widmer of Bunbury SES took out the award.

An active SES volunteer for five years, Keaton is currently serving as a team leader at Bunbury SES Unit.

He was nominated for his dedication to operations and training. In addition, Keaton also carries out public relations, prevention, preparedness and recruitment activities for the unit.
SES fifty years
The following medals were presented to FESA personnel at a special investiture ceremony held at Perth's Government House.

**Australian Fire Service Medal**

Robert Cox AFSM

A senior key contributor to FESA in a career that has spanned some 33 years, Robert Cox has progressed through the ranks from firefighter to his current position as Regional Director for the Kimberley Region.

In a bid to provide a truly united and effective emergency service in the Kimberley, Robert has actively sought to bring together all the arms of FESA, including career and volunteer personnel. He has actively promoted FESA and encouraged all stakeholders to work together to keep the community safe. This has resulted in a much improved preparedness and coordinated response that addresses the unique challenges of a remote environment.

Robert’s role is diverse. It involves everything from the provision of equipment, personal protective clothing and training for volunteers, and the planning and construction of facilities, to the implementation of prevention measures such as aerial controlled burning, flood planning, cyclone management and the introduction of emergency management into remote Indigenous communities.

Through effective media use and continuous liaison with relevant stakeholders, Robert has ensured a high profile and priority for FESA’s many projects in the region. In 2008 his valuable and outstanding contribution assisted in securing the top award in the Western Australia Environmental Awards in recognition of a joint project involving FESA.

**Emergency Services Medal**

(Arthur) Barry Jones ESM

Since 1996 Barry has served FESA and the community of Western Australia in many capacities, notably those of Training Officer, Operations Manager, Regional Director State Emergency Service, Regional Director and Project Director. He has achieved many successes throughout his career, including the development of an effective implementation strategy and administrative approach to incident management within the State Emergency Service (SES).

During the WA Bush Fires Board days he successfully assumed sole responsibility for a project assessing the operational competency of all field staff. This involved conducting statewide interviews and evaluating the ability of staff to competently undertake their responsibilities as operations managers within the organisation.

Barry also developed 12 Bushfire Training Modules, elevating the training package to approved national competencies. In addition, he initiated a radio communications strategy to assist the SES, WA Police and other agencies deal with significant emergencies along the rugged south coast where radio communications were either difficult or non-existent.

Apart from his outstanding management skills, one of Barry’s special strengths is his close links with Indigenous culture, his acceptance by the Indigenous people and an understanding developed from past teaching experiences in the Kimberley area. These skills were invaluable when negotiating the resettlement of the Kiwirrkurra community where people were evacuated after serious flooding in early 2001.
The outstanding achievements of Western Australia’s career and volunteer firefighters were celebrated at the 2009 Firefighting Awards. They recognise the hard work and commitment of those who dedicate their time to protecting our communities and improving the efficiency of firefighting efforts across the state.

Emergency Services Minister Rob Johnson officiated at the breakfast ceremony and proceedings got off to a great start with a video compilation capturing many incidents attended by WA firefighters throughout the year. It also introduced the 12 finalists from both metropolitan and regional WA, including some who had travelled from Tom Price in the Pilbara and Esperance in the Great Southern.

They were shortlisted from an outstanding 45 nominations and as in previous years, the standard of entries was very high. Chief Operations Officer Craig Hynes said this year’s winners represented the best of WA’s fire services. “Whether it’s on the fire ground, behind the scenes delivering prevention and preparedness programs, or developing new initiatives to improve firefighter safety, our finalists and winners have all made an outstanding effort,” Craig said. “They respond time and again to emergencies and the community can rely on these dedicated firefighters to be there when needed.”

**Winners:**

**Career Fire and Rescue Service of Western Australia Award**

**Senior Firefighter Kelly Wyeth** from Perth Fire Station and **FESA Manager Operational Development Terry Jarvis.**

Kelly was recognised for his tireless efforts in developing a new uniform and protective clothing for the Fire and Rescue Service, while Terry was honoured for his achievements in developing and implementing the FESA Staff and Management System (SAMS).
One thousand years of service for Great Southern volunteers

More than 80 FESA emergency service volunteers from the Great Southern received national recognition recently for dedication to serving their local communities.

Chief Executive Officer Jo Harrison-Ward attended the National Medal and long service awards presentations at Bremer Bay, Esperance, Hopetoun, Jerramungup and Kondinin, and thanked the volunteers for their extraordinary passion and commitment.

“These remarkable emergency service volunteers from the Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service, State Emergency Service, Volunteer Emergency Service and Volunteer Marine Rescue Services have achieved more than 1000 years of combined service to the community,” Jo said.

“Their devotion to helping people in times of need 24 hours a day, seven days a week is outstanding. Some volunteers have dedicated the best part of 30 years to supporting their local communities and that is admirable.

“I know the local communities are very proud to have such a committed group of volunteers willing to respond when emergencies occur.”

Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service of WA Award

Tom Price Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service

Members were recognised for their efforts to improve fire safety awareness and education in their local community following a caravan fire at an Aboriginal community in which two young children died.

Murray Lang Bush Fire Service of WA Award

Vicki Booth - Lieutenant and Administration Officer with the Cadoux-Manmaning Bush Fire Brigade and Training Officer for the Shire of Wongan-Ballidu. Vicki was awarded for her fire safety awareness work, encouraging new members to the brigade and promoting the involvement of women in the Bush Fire Service.

Youth Achievement Award

Rikky Mills – Lieutenant with the Baldivis Bush Fire Brigade, was recognised for his contribution at incidents, for providing leadership and guidance to other young volunteers and filling the role of Captain when required. His achievements are all the more impressive for someone of only 19 years of age.

In Memoriam

The following career and volunteer fire personnel passed away over recent months. Deepest sympathy is extended to the family, friends and work colleagues of these esteemed staff and volunteers. Rest in peace.

Station Officer Lance Davey
Acting Area Manager Pilbara Fire and Rescue Service
28 years of service

Senior Firefighter Robert Reed
Success Fire Station ‘A’ Platoon
14 years of service

Doug Christmass AFSM
Northam Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service
60 years of service

John (JJ) Allen
Darlington Bush Fire Brigade, Darling Range Communications Brigade, Air Intelligence Unit
More than 20 years of service

Brian Johnson
FESA State Emergency Service and Bush Fire Service Volunteer, Serpentine Jarrahdale SES Unit and Mundijong Bush Fire Brigade
26 years of service
Awards and recognition

The voluntary service of 57 members of the State Emergency Service, Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service and Volunteer Bush Fire Service was acknowledged at FESA’s annual Volunteer National Medal ceremony. Emergency Services Minister Rob Johnson was present to hand out the prestigious medals and clasps.

“To devote such an incredible amount of time to helping others... is a remarkable achievement.”

“Recipients must be part of an organisation that helps the community during times of crisis, protecting life and property at some personal risk, and this is something our volunteer firefighters and SES members do on a regular basis,” Mr Johnson said.

“The combined service of the 57 volunteer recipients represents more than 1300 years spent assisting friends, family, neighbours and travellers in time of need. To devote such an incredible amount of time to helping others and enhancing the safety of the community is a remarkable achievement.”

Special mention was made of Kevin Cahill of Hines Hill Bush Fire Brigade who received his fourth clasp for contributing 55 years of service.

Warm congratulations were also extended to Graeme Whitehead from Hines Hill Bush Fire Brigade, Charles Heinrich from Sawyers Valley Bush Brigade and Lee Martin from Bindoon Bush Fire Brigade, all of whom were awarded their third clasp for 45 years of service.

While noting all had made an immeasurable contribution, Mr Johnson also paid tribute to those people and organisations whose support and assistance is invaluable to the volunteers.

“It is particularly important to acknowledge the support that volunteers receive from their families, friends and employers, and I thank them all for their great generosity and understanding,” he said.
More than 4800 years of diligent service celebrated

Two presentation ceremonies for the WA Emergency Services Diligent Service medals and clasps were held for career firefighters, station officers, operational managers and corporate staff from country regions and metropolitan Perth. Emergency Services Minister Rob Johnson said it was a pleasure to reward these long serving employees who reflected the diverse range of roles within the emergency services profession.

“Since these awards began, only five employees have achieved 40 years of service and in 2009 four more staff from the Fire and Rescue Service join this select group,” he said.

“Remaining dedicated to the same employer for so many years really is a huge achievement and testament to how you value your job.

“Many staff put their lives on the line to protect us from fires, floods, cyclones and storms. Whether operational or corporate employees, all are dedicated professionals who have helped make WA a leader in emergency services and this is an achievement to be very proud of.”

Mr Johnson congratulated the medal and clasp recipients, including those who had reached a 40 year milestone - career Fire and Rescue Service firefighters Keith Howard and Dennis Cook, and Station Officers Brian Landers and Terry Ambler.

In addition, there were 19 staff who have served for 35 years; 42 for 30 years; 14 for 25 years; 45 for 20 years; and 99 for 15 years.
AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Career personnel receive National Medals

More than 1600 years of collective service was celebrated when 71 career Fire and Rescue Service firefighters, officers and FESA operational staff were presented with National Medals and Clasps.

Career personnel receive National Medals

Career National Medal Recipients 2009. Career Fire and Rescue Service of WA personnel receive their National Medals. Back (l-r): Assistant Chief Operations Officer Coordination Lindsay Cuneo; Manager Operational Effectiveness John Alchin; District Manager John Truswell; Station Officers Russell Perring and Craig Waters; Area Manager Stephen Epic; Station Officer Ricky Curtis; and Senior Firefighters Christopher Wallace and Lance Speller. Middle: Emergency Services Minister Rob Johnson; Station Officers Lionel Randall and Danny Mosconi; Senior Firefighter Neil Traynor; Station Officer Ian Bransby; Senior Firefighters Shaun Farrell, Bradley Harburn and Damon Childs; and Station Officer Mark Papadopoff. Front: Station Officers John Harper and Edward Tait; Senior Firefighters Terry Dunlea, Kim Van Aalen, Steve Fort and Cian Evans.

While some of the recipients attended a presentation in Perth, others received their medals at local ceremonies.

Emergency Services Minister Rob Johnson said the medal honoured long and diligent service by members of organisations that help the community during times of crisis.

“Although the skills and services provided are diverse, each recipient has shown a strong commitment to the safety of our state,” he said.

“Whether putting their lives on the line to protect people, property and the environment or providing management, logistics and support, all are dedicated professionals.

“It is a pleasure to acknowledge such a magnificent contribution and to have recipient families, fellow firefighters and colleagues share in the occasion.”

Among those who received the medal were Station Officer John Harper and District Manager Ronald (Peter) Rollings, both of whom were presented with their third clasp for 45 years of service.

Thirty five firefighters, officers and operational staff received their first National Medal for 15 years of service at the presentation, while 18 received their first clasp for 25 years of service and 16 their second clasp for 35 years of service.

The National Medal is awarded to emergency services personnel who have served their organisation diligently for 15 years. Members are eligible to receive a service clasp for each additional 10 years of service. Prior service with the Defence Force or other eligible organisation can also count towards the National Medal.
Fremantle Station Officer Mark Graham, who is also Chief Petty Officer with the Australian Navy Reserve Diving Team Seven, has been honoured with a Reserve Service Excellence Award.

The award was presented by the Defence Reserves Support Council WA at a special function at Irwin Barracks that also included Employer Support Awards.

Mark undertakes his reservist role at HMAS Stirling and received the award for his dedication, unflagging enthusiasm, commitment and selfless outstanding contribution to Navy diving operations.

He was described as an exceptional administrator of personnel, as evidenced by sound professional knowledge and above average judgement.

The citation also noted that Chief Petty Officer Diver Graham was an outstanding Senior Sailor in keeping with the highest traditions of the Australian Royal Navy, whose loyalty and high standards merited recognition.

Mark said he had been a member of the Navy Reserves for more than 28 years and found his role very rewarding.

“I’ve enjoyed my service with the Navy Reserve and it has provided a range of experiences you could not possibly encounter in other jobs,” Mark said.

“There is a great feeling of camaraderie that exists when working in a diving team with a bunch of really dedicated people.

“A lot of my Navy training and service would not have been possible without the support of my employer, for which I am very grateful.”

Acting District Manager Cockburn Sound Bruce Chamberlain attended the award presentation as Mark’s employer guest.

Seven of the 12 Kalamunda VFRS captains celebrated the Brigade’s 50th anniversary.

L-R: Wally Halse – Captain No.3 (1 year); Terry King – Captain No.6 (1 year); Derek Fletcher – Captain No.7 (2 years); Don Parker – Captain No.8 (2 years); Allan Pugh – Captain No.9 (8 years); current Foreman Jim Armanasco – Captain No.11 (3 years); and current Captain Tony Moiler (12 years).

The award was presented by the Defence Reserves Support Council WA at a special function at Irwin Barracks that also included Employer Support Awards.

Acting District Manager Cockburn Sound Bruce Chamberlain attended the award presentation as Mark’s employer guest.

Firefighter honoured

A 50 year anniversary is an important milestone and the Kalamunda Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service celebrated theirs by holding three events during the year.

Long serving brigade member and former Secretary and Foreman Jim Armanasco who is compiling the history of the brigade, coordinated a reunion of past and present members.

“Around 150 guests, including families of the volunteers, attended a nostalgic get together at the Kalamunda Fire Station,” Jim said.

“It was a wonderful opportunity to renew acquaintances and reminisce about times past. We had plenty of brigade photos on display and an anniversary cake was cut by present Captain Tony Moiler and Foundation Members Frank Cooper (inaugural Secretary), Vic Jones and Wally Halse (inaugural Apparatus Officer).

“We are very proud of the fact that five of our nine life members are still active in the brigade.”

The second social activity was the brigade’s annual dinner that included presentation of service awards to Tony Moiler – 30 years; James Armanasco – 25 years; Ross Smith – 20 years and Travis Bowen – 10 years.

The brigade’s final celebration was a chance for current members and families to take time out and have a fun day off together.

The volunteers went on a weekend bus trip to Hyden and enjoyed a pleasant drive, sampled the local food and accommodation, and surfed Wave Rock.
Projects lead way in community safety

Community safety champions from throughout Western Australia were applauded for their efforts at the 2009 Australian Safer Communities Awards presentation.

These national awards highlight best practice and innovation in projects that are helping to keep our communities safe.

Chief Executive Officer Jo Harrison-Ward said there were many areas where government, communities and the private sector had worked together to strengthen the resilience of Western Australian communities.

“People throughout the state face a range of emergencies on a daily basis, from bushfires, cyclones and floods, to health crises and traffic crashes,” Jo said.

“Our award nominees are among the many people constantly working to ensure communities are prepared for these emergencies so they fare much better and recover faster.

“The high standard of nominations received in this year’s awards reaffirms the wonderful work that is being done out in the community.

“It is also encouraging to see a diverse range of projects addressing many types of emergencies and what people can do to reduce the risks and avoid them if possible.”

The Association for the Blind of WA was awarded state winner in the Non Profit category for its ‘Living Safe’ project that teaches blind or vision impaired people self defence, assertiveness and awareness strategies.

FESA won the State Government category for its ‘Winter Burning’ project that gives people the knowledge to undertake controlled burning on their property to reduce the threat of bushfires.

High commendations were awarded to the remote Indigenous communities of Jigalong, Parngurr, Punmu, Kunawarritji, Kiwirrkurra and Yandeyarra for their ‘Wet Season Preparedness’ project, along with the Department of Environment and Conservation for its ‘Aerial Environmental Risk Observation’ program.

Commendations were awarded to the Town of Kwinana for its ‘Emergency Preparation Pack’ and Surf Life Saving Western Australia for its ‘Life Skills’ for Life project.

State winners were automatically entered in the National Awards and the Association for the Blind of WA project was announced as a national winner.

Emergency service volunteers and their employers took centre stage at the inaugural FESA Volunteer Employer Recognition Awards held at Perth’s Government House. The first of their kind in Australia, the awards highlighted the tremendous support and assistance provided by a diverse group of employers, including businesses from the fields of manufacturing, commerce, retail and service industries, as well as self employed volunteers. Nominations for the 2010 Awards open on 1 March and for the first time can be processed online.

Winners of the State Government category. FESA Senior Environmental Officer Susanah Bilous and Manager Bush Fire and Environmental Protection Branch Ralph Smith, with CEO Jo Harrison-Ward.
Enduro cycling challenge tests firefighters

Four firefighters put their fitness on the line in a tough 580 kilometre offroad bike tour along the Goldfields pipeline from Mundaring to Kalgoorlie. The six day ‘Top up Tour’ raised money for Princess Margaret Hospital for Children Burns Unit and the Fire Services Chaplain Fund.

Taking on the mammoth challenge were Daglish ‘D’ Shift Station Officer Robert Scaddan, Firefighter Alan Brown – Breathing Apparatus Training and Development Manager at the FESA Training Centre, Success ‘C’ Shift Firefighter Andrew Wigmore and Aviation Fire Service Firefighter Joe Reid.

Robert said that as well as raising funds for a good cause, the team also wanted to emphasise the importance of people being prepared for bushfires.

“The trip through regional areas prior to summer was a great opportunity to meet and talk to locals about cleaning up around their house, having a survival plan and knowing what to do if a bushfire threatens,” Robert said.

“We were pleased to have the opportunity to chat to people along the way in places like Northam, Tammin, Merredin, Southern Cross, Yerndi Well and Kalgoorlie.

Whilst en route we met up with volunteer Fire and Rescue Service firefighters and stayed at local fire stations. Before setting off the next day we took the opportunity to ride around town seeking donations and handing out fire safety material.

“The tour took us off the beaten track and away from the main highways and we raised $10000 in donations which was phenomenal.”

Robert said the cycling tour was the first of its kind and the firefighters used it to pay tribute in a small way to the marvellous engineering feat of the pipeline’s creator, C.Y. O’Connor.

“We carried some water from Mundaring Weir to symbolically honour the great work that was done building the Goldfields pipeline. It was handed over to Kalgoorlie Mayor Ron Yurevich with compliments of Mundaring Shire Council,” he added.

Firey quartet take out corporate title

Winners of the prestigious and hotly contested Anaconda Adventure Relay Race Corporate Male category: Stuart Glenn, Ben Borrett, Jeremy Lowe and Scott Gamble.

Firefighters from Perth Fire Station have once again been crowned corporate champions in the physically challenging Anaconda Adventure Relay Race held in Augusta on Sunday 8 November.

The event involved a 13 kilometre paddle, 32 kilometre mountain bike race, two kilometre swim and 14 kilometre run.

The team consisted of Perth ‘D’ Shift Firefighter Scott Gamble (paddle) and Station Officer Jeremy Lowe (mountain bike), and Perth ‘B’ Shift Firefighters Stuart Glenn (swim) and Ben Borrett (run).

“Our performance was outstanding in a field of more than 600 participants,” team captain Scott Gamble said.

“As well as taking out the Corporate Male category, we finished as the fifth team overall on the day. It was a very satisfying result.”
AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Firefighter excels at sport

Senior Firefighter Jane Humphrys of Perth Fire Station ‘C’ Shift has proven herself to be a world class athlete. She recently claimed the title of Ultimate Female Firefighter at the 2009 World Police and Fire Games in Vancouver, Canada, a biennial event that drew more than 10000 competitors from around the globe.

It was Jane’s first appearance in the category and she successfully fended off 12 other finalists to complete the drills minutes before the runner-up. Her impressive workload included hauling a 20 kilogram rolled hose up five stories and dragging an 82 kilogram dummy through an obstacle course.

In a different field of endeavour, in March last year Jane and fellow surf ski paddler Ruth Highman, beat off their competition to win gold in the Australian Surf Life Saving (ASLS) Championships Open Women’s Double Ski race.

The largest event of its type in the world, the ASLS Championships were held at Scarborough Beach. A total of 15000 competitors, supporters and spectators attended, with 96 teams contesting Jane’s chosen event.

Jane began kayaking nine years ago, but soon found herself looking for a greater challenge. Around this time she was introduced to surf life saving by some of her colleagues at Perth Fire Station and it was then that she took up skiing.

A Scarborough resident, Jane currently trains at the local Surf Life Saving Club.

“One of my favourite aspects of the sport is the way it keeps my fitness levels up and improves my core stability,” Jane said.

“Training certainly plays a big part in enabling me to compete - and having a gym at work helps because it means I can still train when I’m away from the squad.

There are some similarities between participating in such a competitive sport and my role as a firefighter.

“Teamwork is imperative, both on the job and in a mixed double ski race. The best two paddlers can be hopeless together unless they work in sync.

“There’s also the ability to remain focused and think about technique, as well as ensuring you’re switched on at all times.”

Jane also enjoys the community service aspect of her sport, the parallels with her career and the fitness requirements. She looks forward to defending her double ski title in Kurrawa, Queensland.

Impressive credentials in Women’s AFL

Twenty seven Western Australians were selected to play in the National Women’s Australian Football League National Championships held in Perth last year – and Murdoch ‘B’ Shift Firefighter Nikki Harwood was one of them.

Announced vice captain of the 2009 All Australian Team that comprised the best 22 players in the championships, Nikki was also on the 2006 and 2007 teams and represented WA four times.

Nikki started playing football at the age of 21 in Sunshine, Victoria. It was part of a rehabilitation program for a back injury received while playing her initial sport of choice, badminton.

“I played badminton competitively for many years and was number one Australian Under 18 singles player and WA Junior Sports Star of the year in 1991,” she said.

“I represented Australia twice at the Under 18 World Championships and three times at senior level.

Unfortunately, I had to retire from badminton, but continued to compete in AFL because I love the sport. Happily, my back is now 100 percent.”

During footy season Nikki trains twice a week with East Fremantle and also occasionally with the Western Australian Fire and Rescue Service Football Team when they have games scheduled against the Police, SAS and Navy.

“A sport like this relies a lot on teamwork, cooperation and communication,” she said.

“On a personal note, it’s important to be able to work well together. Above all, you need to trust one another and have confidence in each other’s abilities.”
Once more firefighters emerged victorious, winning the ‘STAR International Cup’ with a match score of 18 goals 10 points to four goals five points.

Coach Rick Curtis said that going in un-defeated meant no pressure for the team. “With eight regulars unavailable, six debutantes came into the side,” he said. “All players contributed and relished being part of a great win. Our team captain was Troy Stubberfield with vice captains Leon Berthelsen and Clayton Lasscock.

“Game highlights were many and the FRS took control of the game from the outset. Their aggressive, fast start mentality resulted in five unanswered goals in the first quarter. “The win was never threatened as the FRS kicked ahead at every opportunity. There was terrific attack from the half backs and midfielders who provided our two big forwards with great supply, in line with our game plan. The big bodies of Robbie Hansen and Chris Jones could not be held and the pair kicked eight goals between them.”

Award winners were Umpires Best on Ground: Chris Sobejko; Navy Best on Ground: Leon Berthelsen; 2nd best Clayton Lasscock; 3rd best Robbie Hansen - and for a bone crunching hit, the UFU 1% Award went to Ben Borrett. Navy Captain Simon Horner was nominated the side’s best player.

Game sponsors were again generous with donations and support – Derrin Rodriguez (Station Officer Success Fire Station) from STAR International, Royal on the Waterfront and United Firefighters Union of WA.

Australasian Golf Championships

The WA Fire Brigades Golf Club enjoyed another very successful year in 2009, the highlight being the annual 33rd Australasian Firefighters Golf Championships.

President Peter Norman said the event attracted 180 golfers from all states, territories and New Zealand. “The venue was Mandurah Country Club where 18 holes of stroke competition were played on two days,” Peter said. “Our local team of James Ferguson (captain), John Lyons, Don Cruickshank, Jeff Patience, myself and Keith Van den Bergh (reserve), came out ahead to claim the Champion and Stableford competitions.

“After leading by only four strokes on the first day, we held on to win by 12 shots from South Australia, after a 30 minute stoppage due to a thunderstorm. James Ferguson was the best performing team member over the two rounds to be named in the Australasian team.

“Other individual winners for the 36 hole competition were James Ferguson (A Grade nett winner), John Litterick (A Grade nett runnerup) and Alan Cope (Veterans nett winner). Grant Cowper was named the PBI Gold 54 hole Stableford winner (this included his score from the practice round held on the Monday).

“The week of golf culminated in a six man Ambrose event at highly rated The Cut course in Port Bouvard. This competition saw 174 players taking the tee for a shotgun start.”

Chief Operations Officer Craig Hynes spoke at the closing presentation dinner, noting that it had been a terrific competition and a credit to all those involved. “On behalf of FESA I would like to say congratulations to the victorious WA team and also commend all the organisers for a job well done,” he said.

Peter thanked the tournament helpers, club members, retirees and friends, and staff at Mandurah Fire Station. In December the WA Fire Brigades Golf Club donated a $5000 cheque to the Peel Health Campus Foundation, to fund fit-out equipment for their new $3 million Childrens Ward. The funds were raised during the Australasian Championships.
Twenty-five recruits from Firefighter Training School 66 successfully completed theoretical and practical components of their course to graduate with the nationally recognised Certificate II in Public Safety (Fire and Emergency Operations).

These latest recruits to join the career Fire and Rescue Service came from a diversity of backgrounds. Included in the ranks were a former roof tiler, life guard, personal trainer, teacher, police officer, flight attendant, recruitment officer, rigger, customs officer, landscaper, stone mason, paramedic and café manager, just to name a few.

Chief Operations Officer Craig Hynes said the 14 week training course reflected an emphasis on special risks, community engagement, urban search and rescue, and an understanding of how the environment is impacted by fire.

“The new graduates have studied and been tested in a variety of areas including firefighting skills, hazardous materials, urban search and rescue, road crash rescue, bushfire and community safety,” Craig said.

“The qualities of discipline and teamwork were also reinforced throughout to ensure that the recruits emerged well prepared with the skills needed to protect the community.

“All the graduating firefighters have demonstrated they have what it takes to be a valuable addition to Western Australia’s firefighting force.

“To have been selected as a trainee firefighter and graduate from a fast paced and gruelling training program is a great achievement, both personally and professionally.”

Craig also acknowledged the generous support provided by family and friends whose encouragement was vital.

The Institution of Fire Engineers WA Group Award (Theory) went to Firefighter Brad Myers.

Winner of the United Firefighters Union of WA Bob Woods Award (Practical) was Firefighter Oliver Bent.

The Dux Award sponsored by FESA was won by Firefighter Neil Richardson.

The ceremony also acknowledged four retiring long-serving firefighters - Kevin Cuneo, Errol Fisher, Donald Henderson and Gary Clifford.

“Together these firefighters represent 141 years of service and I congratulate them for the commitment and hard work they have put into the service over this time,” Craig said.
Firefighters step out with fresh new look

Career Fire and Rescue Service firefighters are now wearing new dress uniforms that provide improved protection, comfort and durability.

Chief Operations Officer Craig Hynes said the uniforms which are navy in colour, were state of the art firefighting apparel.

“The public image of WA career firefighters has been transformed by this fresh, modern look,” Craig said.

“The new clothing was thoroughly researched by members of the Uniform Protective Clothing Committee.

“Made from durable, fire retardant nomex viscose, the trousers and shirts comply with Australian health and safety standards and will enhance the occupational health and safety of firefighters during operations.

“Reflective stripes have also been incorporated to enhance visibility at night.”

Perth Senior Firefighter Kelly Wyeth was a member of the committee appointed to research the project.

“A great deal of planning and research took place to ensure the uniforms were of the best possible standard and met operational needs,” Kelly said.

“Firefighters from a range of regions across the state were consulted for their views on what features were required.

“FESA’s service provider Stewart & Heaton provided additional information and support using current trends and best practice advice regarding latest fabrics, design and manufacturing techniques.

“The uniform was extensively trialled and tested in the field by more than 20 firefighters working in all types of weather conditions and environments.

“The response was favourable, with some recommended changes and modifications implemented following feedback.”

Kelly was nominated in the 2009 Firefighting Awards for his outstanding work on the project and jointly won the Career Fire and Rescue Service category.

The new uniform issue comprises navy blue shirt and trousers, belt, t-shirt, cap, wet weather jacket and station wear jacket.

New operational turnout clothing is scheduled for distribution this year.

Firefighters donated their former dress trousers to The Salvation Army.

Three eras of the career firefighter uniform displayed outside the old Perth Fire Station.
L-R: Former WA Fire Brigades Board Chief Officer John McMahon in a 1940s outfit, current Fire and Rescue Service Firefighter Brendon McCormack in the gear that has just been replaced, and Station Officer Jason Welsh in the new uniform.
Manager Fleet Engineering Garry Kravainis said the vehicle, which is based at Belmont Fire Station, was designed to meet both current and anticipated operational requirements.

“The design brief required the development of an Incident Command Vehicle (ICV) offering greater control and command capability beyond third alarm or level two incidents, as well as interoperability with other WA emergency response organisations,” Garry said.

“The interior comes complete with ergonomic work stations, meeting areas and appropriate technology.”

Design features and manufacture

Garry said the new vehicle was essentially a two room truck mounted pod where the two rooms expand to create ergonomic work areas.

“Its consistency with existing deployment systems promotes greater operational flexibility,” he said.

“The ICV is transported by a Scania prime mover using the Specialised Appliance Transfer System (SATS). This system has already been proven with the Specialised Appliance Tenders (SETs) located at Murdoch and Osborne Park.

“A key feature is the ability of the appliance body to be removed from the cab chassis. Once disengaged, the chassis is then available for other purposes. This means the appliance is not rendered inoperable when maintenance or repairs are required.

“The functionality offered by being able to expand the offside of the body in two sections significantly increases both the Communications and Incident Management Team (IMT) work areas. This effectively provides an extra seven square metres of usable floor space, bringing the overall total to 21 square metres.

Many other innovative design features have been included, for example the use of lightweight Mono Panel material for the walls, floor and expanding sections of the appliance body; space saving designs for access steps and handrails; self sufficient electrical and back-up systems and smart use of available internal storage space.

Garry said the appliance also featured hydraulic stabilising legs, external and internal lighting in accordance with current standards, and an external awning.

He added that local business MacDonald Johnston Engineering (MJE) manufactured the appliance.

“The company also played a critical role in the design development by producing full working three dimensional drawing models incorporating all the design and operational requirements,” Garry said.

“This meant that changes could be made prior to manufacture, avoiding potentially expensive project variation costs and timeline escalation.

“Full credit goes to the MJE team for producing such a complex and compact appliance.”
A brand new career Fire and Rescue Service incident command vehicle (ICV) has been turning out to major emergencies over the past few months. This welcome addition to the fleet offers a host of features and the latest communications technology, and is already helping to boost the capability and effectiveness of management teams in the field.

History
The new ICV progressed from 2006 onwards, when a Project Action Team (PAT) was established to develop a specification. Chaired by Manager Operational Coordination Paul Ryan, the team included representatives from FESA Operations, Safety Branch, Information, Communications, Technology (ICT), Radio Communications and Fleet and Equipment Services.

Garry said a feature of the PAT’s operation was the high level of collaboration and enthusiasm shown by all involved throughout the project.

“Extensive consultation, consideration of end user needs, potential hazards, occupational safety and health legislation, industry standards and manual handling, were all carefully considered and incorporated in the initial planning of the appliance,” he said.

The project was overseen by Fleet Engineering Officer Mark Bogaers.

Technology
The appliance features state of the art information communications technology (ICT) appropriate for the requirements of incident management. It has been designed to promote the flow of information from the communications section to the operational planning section and the recording of all information within the vehicle.

ICT
Systems Administrator Robert James said the new vehicle made extensive use of new IT and communications technology.

“The use of ‘Smartboards’ touch screen whiteboards, and data projectors, combined with either 3G or satellite connection to the FESA network, allows critical information to be updated more quickly,” Robert said.

“This information can then be communicated to the incident management team via video screens or printouts, including large, full colour maps.

“The new technology is integrated with tried and tested systems, telephone, fax and the like, to ensure reliability is not compromised.”

The ICV has enhanced radio communication facilities, including full recording of all voice traffic.

Radio Technical Officer Justin Mianich who led the communications installation team, said the ICV offered more communication options and included the new Western Australian Emergency Radio Network (WAERN) dual band radios.

“We have installed consoles to select and control the radios, each with cordless headsets to minimise background noise for the operators,” he said.

“There is also a pump up antenna mast, which can be used to improve radio coverage at incidents.”

Communications Manager Anthony Benbow highlighted the key role of FESA ICT staff in the project.

“Because the ICV is a specialised and complex appliance, FESA ICT staff have not only undertaken the system design, but also carried out much of the installation work,” he said.

“These staff are working closely with Operations, to ensure appropriate training material is in place.”

Training
The FESA Training Centre, in conjunction with Operations, has developed training resources for the new vehicle. At the completion of the program a total of 52 station officers and firefighters will be qualified to operate the ICV appliance.

Future appliances
A dual function standby appliance (body only) is scheduled for manufacture on the completion and commissioning of the ICV. It will be used to maintain coverage of key operational requirements during periods of downtime by providing the communications capability of the ICV, along with SET capability in one appliance body.
Goldfields SES Challenge

Ten State Emergency Service teams attended the sixth annual Goldfields SES Challenge at Karalee Rocks, 50 kilometres east of Southern Cross.

Event organiser and Kalgoorlie SES Unit Manager Adam Owen said more than 100 volunteers camped out and enjoyed the natural environment.

“It was rewarding to see how well the event went and to welcome some new faces,” Adam said.

“The eventual winners were the Stirling SES ‘Chuck Wipes’. Gosnells SES ‘Jokers’ claimed second place and the Mundaring ‘Mudlarks’ came a close third, after what proved to be a clever campaign.

“A rigorous program was devised that included a general knowledge quiz and tests on areas as wide-ranging as communications, cliff rescue techniques, forensic search, mass casualty rescue and first aid, navigation and storm damage, to name just a few.

“The success of the challenge was largely due to good planning, as well as the contribution of both organisers and participants,” he said. “Special thanks must go to the Cockburn SES Unit who excelled themselves feeding and watering the ravenous troops.”

For information about the 2010 event please contact Adam Owen on 0408 230 687.

SES volunteers compete in Metro Challenge

Garvey Park in Belmont was a mass of orange when the SES staged its annual Metropolitan Challenge. The event attracted seven teams, including two from Bayswater SES and one each from Bassendean, Canning, Swan, Gosnells and North Shore.

Competitors demonstrated their ability in areas like search, rescue, driving skills, flood boat navigation, communication skills and lateral thinking.

Final top three placings went to Gosnells, followed by Bayswater, with Bassendean coming in third.

Challenge Coordinator Craig Romero said it had been a worthwhile and fun experience for all involved.

“SES volunteers always enjoy a challenge and everyone was very positive about what they learnt and accomplished on the day,” he said.
District Manager Training Steve Summerton said at least 15 such searches had been conducted in the past six months.

“Forensic searching involves looking for evidence or clues that can include a multitude of items, from partial human remains through to a tiny earring or a bullet,” Steve said.

“The reason they are conducted is often connected to a serious crime.

“Not all searches produce a result, but if an object is found, SES volunteers are trained not to contaminate the scene. They immediately mark the position, leaving the item in place and then cordon off the area.

“Police are notified and they in turn request their Forensic Unit to take over.”

Steve added that SES volunteers are trained to a national standard in land search techniques.

“The requirements of the course include some practical forensic searching and there is also a training module that deals with protecting and preserving an incident scene,” he said.

“The type of search is determined by the SES Field Search Controller following a briefing from the Police. The controller allocates segments within the overall search area to team leaders who then arrange for volunteers to begin examining their nominated sector.

“Searches can be undertaken in several ways, for example shoulder to shoulder, crawling on hands and knees, or spaced apart at say five metre intervals.”

Steve said that sometimes nothing is found after many hours of painstaking effort, and occasionally forensic searches discovered items connected to other crimes.

Five SES units were recently presented with certificates of appreciation from WA Police. They were recognised for their assistance to the Major Crime Squad with a particular murder investigation search where SES volunteers spent a total of 410 hours combing through areas of interest.

Acting Senior Sergeant Todd Pender, Officer in Charge of the Emergency Operations Unit, said WA Police wanted to acknowledge the outstanding efforts of SES volunteers in relation to this inquiry.

“SES volunteers all over the state perform searches on a regular basis in support of WA Police and the community and we want them all to know their contributions are greatly appreciated,” he said.

Todd added that a similar presentation was made by WA Police to the SES Communications Support Unit in mid February. It recognised the assistance provided during a bushfire at Lancelin earlier this summer where the SES was instrumental in resolving technical communications problems between traffic contractors and Police.
RESOURCES, TRAINING AND EQUIPMENT

Unique general purpose truck for Stirling SES

Stirling State Emergency Service has a new concept general purpose vehicle. It was built as a prototype for endorsement as the future SES truck specification.

Fleet Engineering Officer Warren King said the main criteria was to produce a crew cab truck with seating for six, in either a two or four wheel drive, depending upon response requirements.

“The selected cab chassis has a rear body that can be configured as a storm or general rescue role for SES response,” Warren said.

“It also has road rescue applications in those regional areas where SES is the primary response.”

Stirling SES Local Manager Chris Brondsema said from a volunteer point of view the truck was a vast improvement on its predecessor.

“It gives us the ability to respond to callouts in a more professional manner and we can carry and access our equipment in a safer, work friendly environment,” Chris said.

“A few refinements have been undertaken, but these were of a minor nature.

“The advent of this new vehicle provides the SES with the ability to have a standardised fleet and equipment, leading to enhanced training and skills options.”

Bussetlon SES move into brand new headquarters

The safety of the Busselton community has been enhanced with the opening of a new $1 million State Emergency Service (SES) unit headquarters on Queen Elizabeth Avenue.

State Treasurer and Vasse MLA Troy Buswell attended a ceremony to declare the building officially open, noting it would serve SES volunteers and the local community for many years to come.

“In order to provide the best possible service to the Busselton community and surrounding areas, it is imperative that the best equipment and facilities are available to our volunteers,” he said.

The purpose built facility has dedicated offices for administration, communications, operations and training, plus a kitchen and two sheds for housing vehicles and trailers.

Mr Buswell said funding for the new building was made possible through the Emergency Services Levy (ESL).

“The ESL continues to support and develop services in communities such as Busselton, enabling them to effectively manage and respond to emergencies,” he said.

“The construction of this new SES building reflects the importance placed on safety and our volunteers, with the community being the big winner.”

The support and understanding shown by families and employers of local SES members is also invaluable in the provision of such an essential emergency service.
When the Merredin VFRS came into existence almost a century ago it consisted of 12 volunteers operating out of a tin shed. A wooden fire station built in 1920 was replaced 15 years later by a brick structure on Bates Street. This building was in continuous use for the next 74 years, until the latest facility came on line.

Emergency Services Minister Rob Johnson unveiled a plaque and FESA Chaplain Ron Wingate blessed the building.

Mr Johnson said the new station, which was funded through the Emergency Services Levy, would boost emergency capability within the Merredin Shire and neighbouring areas.

“Merredin volunteer firefighters attend more than 45 incidents a year, including bush and infrastructure fires, and train and traffic incidents. They also support other fire brigades in the region, making them an essential service in the community.

“With a high seasonal fire risk and increasing numbers of heavy vehicles on Great Eastern Highway, the need for well equipped and highly trained emergency responders has never been more important.”

Mr Johnson also took the opportunity to pay tribute to the outstanding contribution made by the Merredin VFRS over many years.

“It is pleasing to see the enthusiasm shown by local FRS volunteers who had input into the design of their new headquarters and also undertook work around the station,” he said.

“These dedicated volunteers are committed to protecting the community and their efforts deserve our thanks.”

ESL funds new fire station for Carnarvon

Having been based in one building for 40 years, members of Carnarvon Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service (VFRS) are understandably delighted with their modern purpose built $2.2 million fire station.

The facility includes a two bay drive through engine room to house the brigade’s two fire appliances and a designated area for cleaning breathing apparatus equipment. It also has a training room, offices, kitchen, outside amenities area and car park.

Emergency Services Minister Rob Johnson joined volunteer firefighters, family, friends and locals to mark the opening.

“The VFRS in Carnarvon fulfils an essential emergency services role in the community, with brigade members responding to around 100 incidents each year,” Mr Johnson said.

“These include fires, hazardous materials spills and road crash rescues, which can require them to travel more than 100 kilometres to help those in need.

“The move to an upgraded station funded by the Emergency Services Levy is a welcome one. It will benefit the whole community by allowing the service to improve its efficiency and respond faster to emergencies.”

Mr Johnson congratulated everyone who had a role in bringing the project to fruition and thanked the volunteers for their dedication.

“Regional communities are extremely fortunate to be able to rely on the commitment of volunteers like those at Carnarvon,” he said.

“It takes a very special person to become a volunteer, someone who is willing to freely devote their time to helping others, often at difficult hours and in remote locations.

“I am sure Carnarvon VFRS Captain Chris Pugh and all brigade members will enjoy their new fire station which will serve them well for a long time to come.”
The modern facility was officially opened in December 2009 and includes offices, communications and operations rooms, a training room and kitchen.

Murray SES Unit Manager Bob King said the building would increase the unit’s emergency response capability and be a great asset to the local community for many years to come.

“The new Murray SES facility has excellent facilities including a multi-functional radio system, drive-through loading and unloading capacity, computer network wiring, improved outdoor facilities, air-conditioning, showers and a larger garage than we had previously,” Bob said.

“Another important feature is the training room which now has the capacity to be turned into a command centre for significant multi agency or SES multi unit operations.”

Bob added that the headquarters would also provide volunteers with better training facilities and enhance productivity.

“Murray SES has always been a busy unit and the new building will help us continue to meet the growing needs of the local community,” he said.

FESA, through the Emergency Service Levy Grants Scheme, provided funds of $800000 to the Shire of Murray. The remainder of the funding and the land was provided by the Shire.

FESA Training Centre (FTC) is assisting with the introduction of a further training innovation in the form of three hot fire trailers.

Training and Development Officer Paul van der Mey said the equipment brought an exciting range of training possibilities to regional Western Australia.

“The trailers make it possible to simulate flammable liquid, household gas cylinder and car fire incidents,” Paul said.

“The props also allow for flames to be reflected back towards the firefighters for intensive teamwork exercises.

“Added realism is a valuable addition to the training provided by FTC. It does, however, mean that qualified trainers controlling the drills need to ensure they have backup safety teams in place.

“The trailers will be delivered to and managed in the regions.”

Volunteers from the Murray State Emergency Service (SES) are now operating from a new $1 million headquarters on Phillips Street, Pinjarra.

Training in regional WA will be enhanced with the use of hot fire trailers like this one.
Crash pad upgrades training centre equipment

Facilities at the FESA Training Centre have been upgraded with the addition of a purpose built road crash rescue (RCR) pad and shelter.

Applied Training Officer Noel Buckland said the facility provided career and volunteer personnel with a large covered area to practise vehicle related activities, away from the road base surfaces to be found in the training centre grounds.

“The pad can be utilised in all weather conditions and allows Applied Training staff to set up a variety of RCR scenarios in a controlled environment,” Noel said.

“The pad and shelter are used for all RCR training including Manage Injuries and Medium Pumper Heavy Rescue qualifications.”

Where there’s smoke, there’s not always fire...

The arrival of a new state of the art X-Stream smoke generator now makes short work of smoke production at the FESA Training Centre (FTC) and provides a valuable training resource.

Applied Training Officer Noel Buckland said the machine was capable of producing large volumes of dense, realistic smoke, with an extended hang time.

“The machine is very economical to run and uses environmentally friendly, water based smoke fluid,” he said.

“In addition to being put to good use at FTC, the generator is available to FESA Air Operations for fixed and rotary wing training. It can also be utilised for testing major smoke handling systems throughout Perth.”

New rescue vessel for Peaceful Bay

Peaceful Bay Sea Rescue Group is now better equipped to respond to emergencies with the addition of a new $210000 dedicated sea rescue vessel.

The Irwin was recently named and christened at a ceremony held at the Peaceful Bay Operations Centre before a crowd of 80 guests that included representatives from the local community, FESA and local government.

Volunteer Marine Rescue Services Regional Manager Paul Kimber said the 8.5 metre NAIAD rigid hull inflatable craft was one of the best and safest vessels for use in the southern ocean.

“The Irwin provides the group with improved response capabilities, particularly in the Peaceful Bay region where it will provide rescue support to Walpole, Denmark and Albany marine rescue groups,” Paul said.

“The NAIAD copes extremely well with heavy weather conditions characteristic of WA’s south coast, ensuring that launch and recovery phases are both fast and efficient. It can reach 50 knots per hour and carries up to 20 people. This will help to enhance response times as well as efficiency during an emergency.”

Paul added that the vessel came complete with the latest 25Khz Forward Looking Infrared (FLIR) camera which can detect vessels and people in the water at night.

Funding for the vessel included $150000 contributed from FESA Volunteer Marine Rescue Services. Lotterywest also provided $60000 towards the electronics and a storage shed.
Cadets conquer kayaks

A range of challenging and fun activities are open to students with intellectual and physical disabilities who have joined the Emergency Services Cadet Corps Unit (ESCC) at the Cannington Community Education Support Centre.

Cannington Unit Chief Instructor Glenn Stephenson said the cadets particularly enjoyed a cycling trip along the Canning River from Masons Landing to the Riverton Bridge.

“This gave instructors a chance to assess each cadet’s individual ability to cover distances ahead of a future camp at Rottnest Island, where bikes are the main mode of transport,” he said.

“The cadets also went fishing at Point Walter and Woodman Point, and had great success learning about the evasive ways of herring, whiting and bream as well as the habits of the blowie.

“The activities program included kayaking on the Canning River at Kent Street Weir and Riverton Bridge.”

Glenn said that two hiking expeditions also proved to be fun experiences, one at John Forrest National Park heritage trail and the other at Mundaring Weir, on the Bibbulmun Track.

“These pursuits challenged the radio and mapping skills of the cadets whose objectives were to arrive at their destination safely and on time,” he said.

“The group followed leave no trace principles and observed good practice in the environment to ensure sustainability for future generations.”

Some of the other environmentally friendly activities of the unit included visits to the Marine Discovery Centre atHillary’s Boat Harbour and the Enviro Centre at Murdoch, where the cadets learnt about ecological systems in oceanographic and wetland settings.

Participants gain recognition for their accomplishments under the FESA ESCC program which links to an outdoor education program. In addition, the cadets contribute to local volunteer events within the community.

Glenn said an example of this was when the unit assisted in a community clean up of Tomato Lake in the City of Belmont.

“The cadets took to the task with great enthusiasm and showed a keen desire to leave the suburban wetland in a much better condition for the benefit of the ecosystem itself and the surrounding community,” he said.

The Cannington Unit cadets have also displayed their achievements at an Abilities Expo in Perth’s Forrest Place, an event that proved a great success. A dedicated team of organisers supported the Expo and put together a display that members of the public and visiting school communities could both enjoy and learn from.

“It was a great example of what FESA’s ESCC has to offer,” Glenn said.
ESCC Awards
The 2009 Emergency Services Cadet Corps (ESCC) Awards were presented during the annual State Camp at Woodman Point.

The awards recognise the achievements and contribution of cadet units, instructors and FESA members who support the ESCC.

Cadet Achievement Award
Cadet Unit Leader Marelize Venter
Kingsway Christian College
ESCC Unit

Marelize is a natural leader who has developed her skills in this area over the last two years through involvement in the Cadet Leadership Program. She has also been instrumental in helping to attract more cadets to the unit.

Instructor Achievement Award
Unit Leader Janet Cardew
Lakeland ESCC Unit

Janet has been unit leader of the Lakelands Emergency Service Cadet Corps since 2004 and is committed to its continual improvement. She has introduced new training programs and initiatives and also sourced and implemented external community service programs. Janet has encouraged all cadets to support these activities. Her unfailing enthusiasm, positive manner and dedication make her a very worthy awardee.

Unit Achievement Award
Tom Price ESCC Unit

Tom Price ESCC Unit has 50 members out of a total school population of 250. The cadets value their training and have performed a realistic simulation of a multiple motor vehicle accident using hydraulic cutting equipment. They involved other local emergency services such as the fire brigade, ambulance service and police, in an impressive demonstration of their emergency skills.

Cadet Leadership Course
Marelize Venter, Kingsway Christian College Emergency Services Cadet Corps (ESCC), and Jordan Huckel, Ocean Reef ESCC, relate their impressions of a comprehensive four day Leadership and Instructional Skills Course.

An amazing experience, awesome and great opportunity were comments from cadets attending the course coordinated by FESA Volunteer and Youth Services Branch. It drew together 28 cadets from 14 ESCC units around the state, plus one from Cape Burney Bush Fire Service.

The cadets participated in what was a challenging and very rewarding experience. Many great friendships were formed and some useful new skills and knowledge learnt.

Time was spent in the classroom undertaking theory work on the qualities of great leaders.

The group also undertook a variety of team building activities, lessons and limit pushing challenges. The instructors brought the best out in us and were very inspirational.

The course really assisted in developing and improving everyone’s leadership ability and all enjoyed the activities and lessons.

The team encouraged each other in every activity we undertook. It was a great opportunity to face your fears, push your limits and accomplish your goals, and so many of us did just that.

We strongly recommend the course to all senior cadets. If you want to have some serious fun and learn or improve your skills and knowledge, then this course is a must!

The cadet group at the Leadership and Instructional Skills Course at Woodman Point Camp.
Cadets take to the sea on Leeuwin II

One of the highlights for 40 Emergency Services and Junior/Cadet members in 2009 was a voyage of four nights on board the tall ship Leeuwin II.

It was the experience of a lifetime, with the fledgling sailors fully participating in the daily operation of the ship. This included assisting at the helm, navigating, cleaning and galley duties, plus repairs and maintenance.

ESCC State Coordinator Shane Bluett said the cadets were each allocated to a team or watch.

“It was a fantastic opportunity to improve teamwork and leadership skills while learning to trust and respect one another,” Shane said.

“The cadets and juniors may have started the voyage as individuals, but by the time the adventure was over, they had grown together as a well functioning team.”

In addition to cadets from the metropolitan area, some came from places like Northampton and Gingin West as well as the Serpentine-Jarrahdale Bush Fire Service, Brunswick Junction and Southern Cross Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service and Mandurah Water Rescue Group.

ESCC unit representatives who joined the vessel hailed from around the state - Tom Price, Margaret River, Bridgetown, Wongan Hills, Lake Grace, Beverley, Moora and Wyalkatchem.

Clarkson Emergency Services Corps Cadet Amy-Michelle Myers commented:

“The most challenging part was climbing to the top of the main mast, 33 metres high and getting over my fear of heights. The group I worked with on the trip, Red Watch, was awesome.”

Northampton Bush Fire Brigade Junior James Blaikie said:

“I’ve made some new friends and improved my ability to work with strangers. It’s boosted my confidence to do difficult tasks that I’ve never attempted before.”

Shane said FESA’s Volunteer and Youth Services Branch provided administrative support for the activity.

“The trip was a huge success and very rewarding for participants and organisers alike,” he added.