

SOUTH WEST SLOPES ZONE E-NEWSLETTER

District Mangers Report

BY ANDREW DILLON

Welcome to the November 2024 SWSZ RFS newsletter. It's been a busy winter with plenty of RFS activities undertaken.

Many of you would be aware that fire permits are now issued online. Landowners/occupiers can now apply for a permit through the NSW RFS public website. Once the online application is completed by the applicant, the FCC is alerted. A Staff member will undertake a preliminary check before referring the permit to a brigade Fire Permit Officer who may choose to add conditions to the digital permit. Once the permit conditions are added (following an inspection of the burn site if required,) the permit is issued by way of an email to the applicant. So far the system is working well and in the first two weeks of October a total of 66 permits were issued using the new system. The old pad permits are still able to be used if needed.



Nearly 100 members attended the district exercise on 15 September at the Fire Control Centre. With favourable weather, members were kept busy in participating in a variety of scenarios. I hope attendees enjoyed the operations room scenario where we discussed the processes involved in preparing for bad fire weather days and the systems used for the quick dispatch of tankers, heavy plant and aircraft. Members also honed their skills with first aid, electric vehicle incidents, pumping and structure fires.

This Issue:

District Mangers Report	1
Hazard Reduction Activities	3
Health and Safety	4
Starlink Technology	5
WHATS NEW... Online Permits	6
2024 Captains Conference	7
FOCUS ON... Legal Process	8
SWSZ Cadets	9
District Exercise	10
MEDAL CEREMONIES	11
Photo Gallery	12

On the 10th of October, the Fire Control Centre hosted the second annual pre-season field officers forum, with 70 field officers in attendance. Deputy Commissioner, Field Operations Peter McKechnie addressed the forum and answered questions regarding fleet, stations and operational matters. Deputy Commissioner McKechnie's attendance was appreciated by the field officers and it's always positive when a member of the RFS executive takes the time to speak at one of our local events.



It was exciting to see the new Yannawah station opened, and a new Cat 1 tanker handed over to the Yannawah brigade. A big thank you to the brigade for hosting the event and to the staff who conducted the ceremony. Work has commenced on the Taylors Flat brigade station with the slab poured and shed construction about to commence.

Once again, the SWSZ Cadets have done the District proud by placing second overall at the Cadet Championships held at Holbrook on 19 and 20 October. The cadet team achieved several first-place results in individual scenarios over the weekend. Well done to everyone involved.

Regardless of what the fire season brings us, it remains critical that the SWSZ Pre Incident Plan is actioned when we hit that trigger of Fire Behaviour Index - 40. This season will be no exception.

Stay safe everyone.

**"It was
exciting to
see the new
Yannawah
station
opened..."**



HAZARD REDUCTION ACTIVITIES

This Spring, we successfully completed a number of hazard reduction burns, thanks to the significant assistance from our brigades. These efforts have helped remove grass fuel along road reserves and rail corridors in key locations across the District.

Burns completed include:

- Bribbaree Railway Corridor
- Burley Griffin Way, Stockinbingal
- Burley Griffin Way, Cunnigar
- Hume Highway Jugiong – Stage 2
- Galong Railway Corridor
- Olympic Way, Cootamundra
- Nangus Roadside Burning Program

These burns not only reduce fire risk but also serve as an excellent opportunity to check our tankers in preparation for the fire season and familiarise new recruits with equipment and procedures.

Below are photos taken during the Stockinbingal burn, which significantly reduced grass fuel between Burley Griffin Way and the railway corridor. This burn covered a distance of 7.5 kilometres, starting at Stockinbingal and extending east toward Wallendbeen.

Thank you to everyone involved for your hard work and commitment to keeping our community safe!



“These burns not only reduce fire risk but also serve as an excellent opportunity to check our tankers in preparation...”



HEALTH & SAFETY

Health & Safety Representative (HSR) Elections

During the next few months nominations will be sought from members (both staff and volunteer) for election by members of the various RFS workgroups, to the position of the Workgroup's HSR and/or Deputy HSR.

It has been my pleasure to have filled this role in the South West Slopes Workgroup for the past two terms, however it is time that younger members raised the safety torch. If you are passionate about safety and ensuring that everything is done to ensure that we all go home at the end of each shift without injury, then I implore you to stand for election when the call for nominations is received. If you would like to discuss the role, feel free to contact me - Phil Baer 0428 303 155.

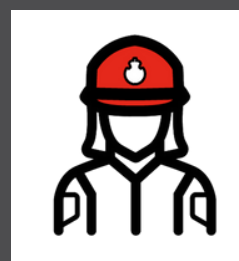
76% of work related traumatic injury fatalities and 61% of serious workers' compensation claims occur in just 6 industries (Key Work Health and Safety Statistics Australia 2024) with our industry (public administration and safety) being among that 6.

The same report also notes –

- Vehicle incidents account for the largest proportion of worker fatalities, followed by falls from a height.
- 80% of all serious claims involve body stressing, falls, slips and trips, being hit by moving objects, or mental stress.
- Claims for mental health conditions continued to increase in 2022-23 and now account for 11% of all serious claims. The median time lost is more than 5 times that recorded across all injuries/diseases.



60%
More than half the total number reported workplace WHS incidents was an injury to our members



65%
More than half the total number reported workplace WHS incidents occurred by our volunteer members

STARLINK FOR TANKERS

In a significant upgrade for the Fleet, RFS vehicles will soon be equipped with Vehicle as a Node (VaaN) technology. This advancement will enable RFS personnel to communicate during a disaster in the most remote locations or if communication systems go down.

With Starlink satellite technology, our teams will have access to radios, mobile phones, and handheld devices anytime and anywhere—ensuring connectivity even in areas where infrastructure has been compromised.

The upgrade will provide an important backup to communication systems and location-finding technology already in use.

The added technology will also give crews the capability to live stream video of fires from anywhere in the state, providing command centres with the latest intelligence about an incident. Importantly, firefighters will be able to use their phones to contact home or the Fire Control Centre in known black spots ensuring vital information is communicated effectively.

“The RFS is collaborating with the NSW Telco Authority to implement this communication upgrade, with installations expected in the SWSZ over the next 18 months”

Fire trucks are getting smarter
We're rolling out satellite-powered tech!



WHATS NEW...

Online Permits

The NSW rural fire Service has recently introduced the ability to apply for and be issued a permit online.

What does this mean for a brigade Fire Permit Officer...

- Brigade permit officers will be notified via email and a phone call if an online permit has been received for your brigade area.
- You will have a choice as to whether you wish to complete the approval/reject process online.
- Conditions can still be added to the online permit and inspections of the proposed burn are still an option if you think it's required.
- Pad Permits are still valid, and the permit details need to be sent to the Fire Control Office before the day of the intended burn. This can be done via phone, email or in person.

After receiving an approved permit - either online or via the paper pad method, the person conducting the burn needs to notify both the Fire Control Centre and their neighbours at least 24 hours before they intend to burn.

visit https://nswrfsprod.service-now.com/guardian_csp

Did you know...

We have issued
102 online permits, since the system went live on the 1st of October 2024

The screenshot shows the RFS Guardian portal homepage. At the top is the RFS logo and a navigation bar with links: Fire Permit, Burn Notification, Total Fire Ban Exemption, TOBEX Notification, Fire Trail Enquiry or Issue, FAQ, User Guides, Activate an account, and Register an account. Below the navigation bar is a breadcrumb trail: Home > Guardian Homepage. The main heading reads 'Welcome to the Guardian portal'. There are five service tiles arranged in two rows. The first row contains: 'Apply for a Fire Permit' (with a document icon and subtext 'Fire Permits are free and now available online'), 'Notify of your planned burn' (with a flame icon and subtext 'You need to let us know before you light up'), and 'Submit Fire Trail Enquiry or Issue' (with a plus icon and subtext 'Report an issue or submit a general enquiry'). The second row contains: 'Apply for a TOBAN Exemption' (with a document icon and subtext 'Apply for a specific exemption online') and 'Notify of your proposed works' (with a flame icon and subtext 'Prior to commencing on any TOBAN day'). At the bottom, there is an 'Announcements' section with two links: 'For a list of frequently asked questions, please see our FAQs' and 'For step-by-step guidance on how to use the system please see our Quick Reference Guide'.

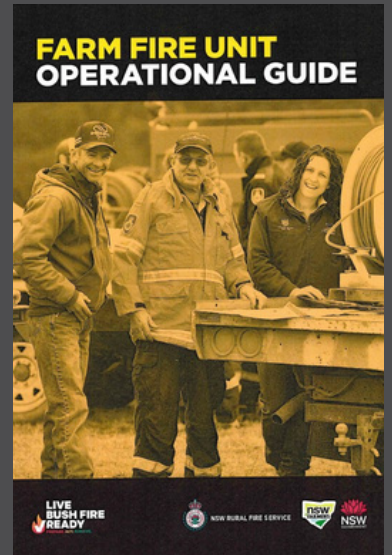
2024 CAPTAINS CONFERENCE

In October, the SWSZ hosted the Captains Conference, which saw the attendance of over 70 members for a pre-season gathering. The event facilitated several productive discussions on a range of important topics.

The forum was inaugurated by Deputy Commissioner for Field Operations, Peter McKechnie, who participated in a valuable Question & Answer session, engaging directly with attendees.

Key topics covered during the conference included a progress report on fire trails and discussions on hazard reduction priorities across the District. Other important areas addressed were the Farm Fire Unit program, a fire ground safety case study, legal process requirements, and the newly introduced online permit system.

Attendees enjoyed excellent catering provided by the Monteagle team, ensuring all members were well looked after throughout the event.



FOCUS ON...

Legal Process

In New South Wales (NSW), the Rural Fire Service (RFS) is essential in managing bushfires and safeguarding community safety. A critical part of this responsibility involves tackling illegal and careless fires, which pose significant risks to life, property, and the environment.

Illegal Fires are those intentionally set without proper authorization, such as failing to obtain a permit or neglecting to notify the appropriate authorities. Careless Fires, in contrast, often result from negligence, like leaving a campfire unattended or not taking necessary precautions when using fire in outdoor settings.

When responding to a fire that may be illegal or careless, our members can significantly contribute to helping to uphold community safety and accountability by taking several important actions:

1. Take Photographs

Upon arrival at the scene, take photos of the fire and its surroundings. This documentation helps establish the conditions and context at the time you arrived, providing valuable evidence for any subsequent investigation.

2. Record Detailed Notes

Keep thorough records of your observations and interactions. Note who you spoke to, what they said, and any other individuals present at the scene. If possible, document details about anyone who admits to starting the fire, as this information can be crucial for legal proceedings.

3. Collect Witness Information

Gather contact details from any witnesses present. Their accounts may provide additional perspectives that support the investigation into the fire's cause.

For more information please give Krystaal a call at the Fire Control Centre 6386 1700.

**“Our members
can significantly
contribute to
helping to uphold
community safety
and
accountability...”**



SWSZ CADETS

Sam McPaul Cadet Championships

The SWSZ Cadet Team showcased their skills at the Sam McPaul Cadet Championships in Holbrook on the weekend of October 19-20, securing an impressive second place overall among 11 competing teams.

The event featured over a dozen competitions, allowing cadet teams to demonstrate their dedication and training. The SWSZ team's strong performance included first-place finishes in several individual events, highlighting their hard work and commitment.

This achievement is a testament to the effort of the SWSZ team. Congratulations are also due to the Lavington Cadet Team for taking home the top prize.

The SWSZ team members included Jack Apps, Skylah Apps, Phoebe Murphy, Aaron Finney, and Addison Dovert.

A heartfelt thank you goes out to the volunteers and parents who supported the team throughout the event: Ethan Dovert, Mark Dovert, Daniel Dovert, Joy Cox, Lachlan Hicks, Tracy Blackney, and Aiden Blackney. Special recognition is also deserved for Alyssa Grady, Peter Bulliman, and Greg Dunn, who trained and coordinated the team.



DID YOU KNOW...

Youth members can join their local brigade starting at age 12, and with parental consent, they may become operational members at age 16

SWSZ DISTRICT EXERCISE

District Exercise 2024 Recap

The biennial district exercise was held at the Harden Fire Control Centre on Sunday 15th September, with close to 100 members in attendance. Unlike our last exercise, we had fantastic weather for the day - albeit after a cold start.

After a hearty breakfast, the 19 tankers involved departed in five strike teams to the round-robin of scenarios organised for the day. Each scenario lasted for an hour with an air horn prompting brigades to move on to the next event. Scenarios were held in the FCC compound and the Harden Racecourse. Each strike team completed the following scenarios:

- Electric vehicle incident – Members learnt about the dangers and operational requirements when attending electric vehicle fires.
- Operations room simulation – Participants were guided through the systems and processes used by the FCC team to ensure crews are adequately resourced at fires.
- Second-story house fire – Using the structure fire training prop crews practiced defensive techniques in a simulated house fire scenario.
- Pumps and drafting – Crews put their pumping skills to work by drafting and pumping water around a circuit.
- First aid and medical- Teams were presented with a motor vehicle accident with multiple simulated injuries and led through first aid and safety processes.

We were pleased to have the Rural Fire Service Association (RFS) in attendance and sponsor a coffee van which was appreciated by all. Next to the coffee van Joy Cox set up a community engagement display. Of course, we had the Monteagle catering team who cooked up a great breakfast, lunch and afternoon tea – a big thanks to the team!

We also welcomed Brock Harley, the new Western Area Command Psychologist, who had the opportunity to meet and chat with several members.

Congratulations to the Wombat, Gundagai South and Waugoola Brigades who took out the lucky door prizes including truck wash kits.

CHECK OUT THE PHOTO GALLERY ON PAGE 12

2024 SWSZ EXERCISE BRIGADES...

BRIBBAREE
BOARA
COOTAMUNDRA HQ
CANOBOLAS ST
DEMONDRILLE
GALONG
JUGIONG
MONTEAGLE
NANGUS
REIDS FLAT
RYE PARK
SOUTH GUNDAGAI
THUDDUNGRA
WOMBAT
YANNAWAH

2024 MEDAL CEREMONIES

YANNAWAH & HARDEN FCC

On August 17, 2024, members and families of the Yannawah Brigade came together to celebrate a momentous occasion: the grand opening of the new Yannawah Station, the handover of a new fire truck, and the recognition of the exceptional service provided by dedicated brigade members.

The celebration was attended by staff from the South West Slopes Fire Control Centre, as well as Ms. Steph Cook, the Member for Cootamundra, and Superintendent Trevor Reeves, the Capability Manager for Area Western. During this event, thirteen members were honored with Long Service Medals, collectively recognizing over 400 years of service.

Later that day, a second ceremony was held at the Fire Control Centre, where we were again joined by Ms. Cook, Superintendent Reeves, and Hilltops Mayor Cr. Margret Roles. This ceremony celebrated an astounding total of 2,750 years of service, awarding Long Service Medals and Clasps to 84 members from across the zone.

We were privileged to present medals for 40, 50, and 60 years of service, as well as a posthumous medal for 70 years of dedicated service awarded to Morris "Tiger" Hunter of the Bribbaree Brigade. His daughter was present to accept the award on his behalf, creating a deeply touching moment in the day's events.



**THE LONG SERVICE
MEDAL RECOGNISES
LONG SERVICE BY
CURRENT MEMBERS OF
THE NSW RFS, BOTH
VOLUNTEER AND
SALARIED.**

**AWARDED FOR TEN
YEARS OF LONG
SERVICE WITH
IMPELLERS AND
CLASPS AWARDED FOR
EACH SUBSEQUENT TEN
YEAR PERIOD OF
SERVICE.**

CHECK OUT THE PHOTO GALLERY ON PAGE 13

PHOTO GALLERY



PHOTO GALLERY



PHOTO GALLERY

