



FIRE SERVICES
COMMISSIONER
VICTORIA

Leadership Integration Accountability

Annual Report 2013 - 2014

WORKING IN CONJUNCTION WITH



Department of
Environment and
Primary Industries



OUR PURPOSE:

A safer and more resilient community.

OUR VISION:

Fire and emergency services work with the community, Government and business as one integrated and unified team.

OUR ROLE:

The Commissioner oversees and works with Victoria's three fire services to lead, enable and facilitate change and a program of continuous improvement.



FIRE SERVICES
COMMISSIONER
VICTORIA

Fire Services Commissioner Victoria

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Minister for Police and Emergency Services
Minister for Bushfire Response
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Dear Minister

FIRE SERVICES COMMISSIONER ANNUAL REPORT 2013-14

I am pleased to present you with the Annual Report for 2013-14 in accordance with Section 31 of the Fire Services Commissioner Act 2010 for presentation to Parliament.

The report provides a summary of the performance of my functions and exercise of my powers during 2013-14, along with related matters of public interest.

This will be the final report of the Fire Services Commissioner. The functions of that role will be subsumed by the new role of Emergency Management Commissioner, which comes into effect on 1 July 2014.

Yours sincerely

Craig Lapsley PSM
Fire Services Commissioner, Victoria

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Environment and
Primary Industries





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A MESSAGE FROM THE FIRE SERVICES COMMISSIONER

The creation of the role of Fire Services Commissioner in October 2010 was a direct outcome of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission.

In the 3½ years since then, Victoria has undertaken an ambitious reform program aimed at assisting the fire and emergency services to work as one in preparing for and responding to emergencies. Central to these efforts has been the interests of the community.

Much this work has been largely “invisible” to the community. There has been a significant focus on creating better systems of work to ensure that the fire services, other emergency agencies and government more broadly are better linked in the face of major fires and emergencies.

Over the past year, many of the initiatives which placed the community firmly at the centre of the reform effort have come to fruition.

There have been major advances in the delivering information and warnings to communities directly in the path of fires and other emergencies. These initiatives have included a fully redeveloped FireReady Smartphone app, capable of pushing out literally millions of messages across Victoria in a timely and targeted manner.

The creation of VicEmergency, the single web site for all emergencies, was another major achievement.

Three Community Fire Refuges were piloted in extreme risk Victorian communities over the 2013-14 Fire Danger Period as part of a program to develop a range of bushfire shelter options for those at risk. Among these are more than 280 Neighbourhood Safer Places across the state.

There have been major advances in setting the foundations for an integrated information platform that will assist all emergency agencies and the community at large to share a common picture of what is happening at times of crisis.

Meanwhile, the 2013-14 summer season itself proved highly challenging. Severe bushfire conditions triggered the busiest and most complex summer period since the 2009 Victorian bushfires. The season was marked by a heatwave, long-running fires in remote bushland and fast moving grassfires on Melbourne’s urban fringe. Emergency services personnel tackled 4,600 fires, an increase of 300 on the previous season. Other major challenges included Victoria’s first formal community evacuation in the Grampians and the protracted Hazelwood coal mine fire at Morwell.

The summer season demonstrated that many of the significant reforms introduced over the past five years have been both effective and changed the way in which the fire and emergency services deliver community safety outcomes. Victoria’s volunteer and paid emergency management personnel again stepped up to protect communities, landscape and livelihoods. People and communities who had prepared before the season were themselves able to play a role in reducing the season’s impact, as were individuals who actively planned, prepared, and took responsibility for their own safety.

This season brought home the importance of an integrated approach to emergency management. But while both firefighters and the broader emergency management community showed the potential for a joined up approach, it is vital that the emergency management arrangements behind them are effective, sustainable and encompass all hazards.

Victoria is about to embark upon its biggest emergency management reform for almost 30 years. 1 July 2014 marks a milestone in the reform journey with changes that strengthen Victoria's ability to build resilience within communities and increase interoperability between emergency management organisations.

On 30 June 2014, the *Fire Services Commissioner Act 2010* is repealed and the role of Fire Services Commissioner ceases. The *Emergency Management Act 2013*, which comes into effect on the following day, will establish Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) and the commencement of the Emergency Management Commissioner (EMC). I was appointed to this role in May 2014.

The new arrangements reflect a shift to an 'all hazards, all agencies' approach to emergency management in Victoria. This is the next logical step to ensure all emergencies, not just fire, are part of the change, reform and leadership program required for the future.

While this is the last annual report of the Fire Services Commissioner, the work that has begun will continue. The new reform arrangements would not have been possible without the steps that have been taken by the fire services and other agencies towards achieving a safer and more resilient Victoria.



Craig Lapsley PSM
Fire Services Commissioner





THE 2013-14 FIRE SEASON OPERATIONAL OVERVIEW

During the 2013-14 summer, Victoria experienced its most significant fire season since the 2009 Victorian bushfires, challenging emergency management organisations and the Victorian community.

Despite predictions of average conditions, record-breaking extended periods of heat were recorded as above-average temperatures persisted across the summer months.

Victoria endured 19 days of Extreme and Severe Fire Danger Rating and 16 days of Total Fire Ban across the season. More than 463,000 hectares of public and private land were burnt and a total of 80 residences destroyed. Tragically, this season again brought home how dangerous bushfire can be with a community member losing their life in the Grampians.

Interstate and international support was again called upon, with 2,850 international and interstate firefighters spending just over two months assisting Victorian crews in incident control centres and at CFA fire stations across Victoria.

In January 2014, fires occurred mainly in the Northern Grampians, Loddon-Mallee and Gippsland. For the first time since the introduction of the evacuation arrangements after the 2009 bushfires, a formal evacuation order was issued to the community of Halls Gap.

In February, the communities of Gisborne, Wallan, Kilmore, Morwell, Fernbank, Glenaladale and numerous surrounding areas came under direct threat. Conditions peaked on February 9, when Victoria recorded 954 emergency incidents in a 24-hour period - almost six times more than on a normal summer's day.

From February, the Hazelwood Open Cut Mine fire challenged more than 7,000 individual firefighters and the community for 45 days before being declared safe. Firefighting support was called in from South Australia, Tasmania, ACT and Air Services Australia in response to the fire. A Board of Inquiry was established by the Victorian Government to review the fire and is expected to submit its report to the Government later this year.

The largest bushfire fire complex covered 165,806 hectares at Goongerah-Deddick in East Gippsland and burned for 70 days. Large fires once again affected peri-urban areas on Melbourne's fringe. The most significant such fire started at Mickleham, spreading north as far as Kilmore, consuming over 22,000 hectares of pasture and crop and destroying 18 homes and thousands of head of stock. Other impacted areas were in or near Warrandyte, Dromana, Lara and within the Metropolitan Fire District at Keilor.

The provision of timely, tailored and relevant warnings and information continued to be key focus during the season. In the second busiest season on record after 2008-09, incident Controllers issued a total 3,644 Warnings and Advice messages and held 39 community meetings throughout the state during fires.

For information on operational reviews, see page 19

CASE STUDIES

EVACUATING RURAL COMMUNITIES

The first generation of Victoria's evacuation arrangements was ready in time for the 2010-11 Fire Danger Period and updated in subsequent years.

Until 2013-14 there had not been a formal recommendation to evacuate due to bushfire in Victoria. This fire season, however, evacuation was recommended during seven bushfires.

The first of these formal evacuations was for Halls Gap, Dadswells Bridge, Pomonal, and surrounding communities in the Grampians in western Victoria.

On Wednesday 15 January 2014, a band of lightning crossed through the state igniting numerous bushfires. Multiple lightning strikes started fires in the Grampians and many were already spreading before dusk that evening.

Based on fire intelligence and an analysis of potential consequences as the fire spread and reached 11,000 hectares, the Incident Controller made a recommendation for evacuation of the three settlements and their surrounding areas.

Victoria Police, in consultation with the Incident Management Team, developed an Evacuation Plan. About 600 houses were within the identified evacuation area, but it was not known how many were holiday homes. A number of caravan and holiday parks also had to be considered. Three residents in Halls Gap were identified by police as on the vulnerable persons register. These people were contacted individually.

It was determined it would take four hours and require more than 80 police to door knock all houses. (A large number of police were recalled to duty from surrounding stations).

Traffic Management Points (TMPs) were identified. Public meetings were planned for early Friday morning in Halls Gap and Dadswells Bridge and information to the community focussed on making sure people were aware of the gravity of the situation.

The Recommendation to Evacuate specified the evacuation travel routes to relief centres established at Stawell, Ararat and Horsham.

The doorknock began five hours before the expected impact of the fire. During the doorknock, residents details and their intentions to withdraw or remain were recorded. All activities were completed in under four hours.

The withdrawal stage went smoothly and without traffic issues.

When it was deemed Halls Gap was no longer under threat from fire, registered residents could return to the town. These people were issued with wrist bands so they could come and go as they required.

The Halls Gap township was reopened to the public at 7am on Sunday, 19 January 2014. The Grampians Northern Complex fire eventually burned 55,100 hectares and lasted 81 days.

Among the recommendations of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission was the introduction of "a comprehensive approach to evacuation".

A RAPID ONSET FIRE ON MELBOURNE'S FRINGE

Warrandyte is an outer north-eastern suburb of Melbourne, 24 kilometres from the CBD. It is popular with residents seeking a peri-urban lifestyle, but also attracts many day visitors due to the natural beauty of its bushland setting.

Major fires swept through the area in 1851, 1939 and 1962 with other significant fires in Warrandyte in the 1980s and 1990s. As a result, many within the Warrandyte community recognise the need to live with the risk of bushfire. Fire and emergency services also recognise the risk of the residential-bushland mix.

Bushfire prevention, preparedness and readiness activities are well established in this community. A number of local groups have a primary focus of bushfire education and preparedness.

At 8.30am on 9 February 2014 the temperature at Melbourne Airport was 33 degrees and northerly winds were recorded at 30kph with gusts to 60kph. At 11am the Forest Fire Danger Index spiked at 120 ahead of the south westerly change. A maximum temperature of 40 degrees, relative humidity of 7 per cent and north westerly wind of 50kph gusting to 80kph preceded the change.

Shortly after midday, a fire was reported at Flannery Court, Warrandyte.

Arriving within five minutes of the initial alarm, the Warrandyte CFA Captain identified houses under immediate threat as the fire had already moved from the nearby bush. The first of the three houses destroyed by the fire was already in flames by the time additional firefighting resources arrived.

Within 10 minutes of the fire being reported, additional resources including a Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) Pumper Strike team and aircraft support were called in. Shortly after, the first of many community warning messages was issued.

At 12.38pm, a predicted wind change impacted on the fire, immediately spreading it in an easterly and uphill direction. Two more houses were destroyed shortly after.

“I don't feel like we live in a rural area here, but I do today”

Warrandyte resident

An incident objective of stopping the fire at Tindals Road was implemented early.

The first of two water bombing helicopters arrived 45 minutes after the fire started as other nearby aircraft were already tasked to fires in the west of the city.

Approximately 150 fire-fighters, 20 fire trucks and two aircraft were involved.

The cause was later determined to be consistent with a branch falling on nearby high voltage power lines and igniting bush in the power line easement.

“It was a very significant achievement for crews to contain Sunday's Warrandyte fire to about 10 hectares, and limit the damage to four properties, especially given the conditions we were facing of winds of up to 90kph when the change came through.

“Some houses were just lucky... there's no other way to put it”

CFA Operations Manager

COMMUNITY INFORMATION AND WARNINGS

SUMMER FIRE CAMPAIGN

The Victorian Emergency Communication Committee coordinates the Victorian Government's fire and flood communications.

The Fire Services Commissioner provides input and support to the campaign, in line with his operational and legislated responsibility for issuing community information and warnings, and the oversight of the Bushfire Safety Policy Framework.

The 2013-14 campaign was launched during Fire Action Week (17 to 24 November 2013). Campaign activity ran from mid-December 2013 to mid-March 2014. Continuing hot weather and significantly hazardous conditions prompted an extension of the campaign.

The Fire Services Commissioner funded and contributed to a range of community information projects as part of the campaign. These included:

- Video updates of Craig Lapsley speaking on current and anticipated fire conditions, with the support of an Auslan interpreter. Videos were posted on YouTube, and promoted through CFA's Facebook page and Twitter and other Victorian Government platforms and social media channels
- The Commissioner provided funding for Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) advertising and collateral development. VFBV's television advertisement was included in the Victorian Government's Community Service Announcement rotation
- A 30-second segment filmed with Craig Lapsley, along with others filmed with Victoria's fire chiefs and Victoria Police's Assistant Commissioner, ran as Community Service Announcements and paid television advertising across the state.

VICTORIAN WARNING PROTOCOL

The Victorian Warning Protocol (the Protocol) provides emergency response agencies with coordinated and consistent direction on providing emergency advice and-or warnings to the Victorian community.

The Protocol, first published in 2009, was updated in July 2013 to record the changes implemented as part of the response to the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission.

Key updates to the Protocol include information on the Australian Government Standard for the Common Alerting Protocol, a common standard for the dissemination of all-hazard alerts and warning messages during any emergency.

Updates to the telephony based warnings section of the protocol include reference to location-based improvements to the national telephony-based warning system Emergency Alert, which enables telephone warnings to a specific geographic area.

The language around warnings and public information has been updated to reflect changes made as part of implementing recommendations of the VBRC.

NATIONAL REVIEW OF WARNINGS

Over the past five years, significant work has been carried out across the country to improve community information and warnings.

While the 2009 Royal Commission triggered much of this work, it is important to recognise that bushfire is just one of the emergencies that confront communities every year.

A *National Review of Warnings and Information*, led by the Fire Services Commissioner, is investigating how warnings and information are provided to communities across multiple hazards.

The purpose of the *National Review of Warnings and Information* is to share jurisdictional knowledge and determine current good practice in providing warnings and information to communities during emergencies.

A component of this review is the requirement to look at each of the channels used to distribute emergency information. One of these is Emergency Alert. The purpose of this work is to identify the most effective use of Emergency Alert across jurisdictions with the aim of developing a nationally consistent approach, improve the Emergency Alert operator-user experience, measure the success of the system in warning communities, and identify how to use it to influence the right behaviours in communities during emergencies.

The review will report on themes, gaps and suggested approaches towards good practice. Other outputs may include filmed case studies that will assist field staff to better undertake their role, as well as recommendations as to areas that need further work or research.

“Over the past five years, significant work has been carried out across the country to improve community information and warnings.”

INFORMATION & WARNINGS

It is up to you to be aware of what is happening around you. Remember to stay informed and speak to others about your local conditions.

When are warnings issued?
If a fire starts that may threaten life or property, warnings are issued. It's up to you to take notice, seek information, make decisions and act. Remember, don't rely on one source of information.

What do warnings mean?



Advice ⚠️
There is a fire in your local area, access information and monitor conditions.



Watch & Act ⚠️
Fire is heading toward you, conditions are changing and you need to take action now to protect yourself and your family.



Emergency Warning ⚠️
You are in imminent danger and need to take action immediately. You will be impacted by fire.

How do I get warnings and know what's happening? Remember don't rely on one source of information.

Radio	Victorian Bushfire Information Line	Website	Television	FireReady App	Sirens	Telephone Alerting	Social Media
 ABC local radio, commercial radio and designated community stations	1800 240 667 TTY 1800 555 677 then ask for 1800 240 667  133 677 TIS 131 450	 www.emergency.vic.gov.au	 Sky News	 Android, iPhone / iPad	 5 minute continuous Seek further information	 EMERGENCY ALERT. BE WARNED. BE INFORMED. SMS – all networks Landlines	 Like: CFA Facebook page Follow: @CFA_Updates
Information and warnings available for you to access					Warnings activated to assist you		Social Media

www.emergency.vic.gov.au **Victorian Bushfire Information Line | 1800 240 667**

COMMUNITY INFORMATION AND WARNINGS

FIRE DANGER RATING SIGNS

A network of 65 automated Fire Danger Rating (FDR) signs has been installed across Victoria as part of a pilot program, which is now complete.

The signs are located in highly visible, high traffic locations across the state. They display the daily FDR by weather district and are automatically updated from the State Control Centre using an RSS feed and 3G technology. The signs are the responsibility of the Fire Services Commissioner.

Funding has been approved to increase the current state network by up to an additional 20 signs.

Consultation on locations for the signs is underway, involving input from CFA, the Department of Environment and Primary Industries, local government and VicRoads.

Priority locations are major access roads, roads leading to high activity summer tourist locations or high fire risk locations, and major roads leaving the Greater Melbourne area. The selected locations need to have clear line of sight, suitable 3G capacity, and be clear of trees to ensure solar recharge.

Work to install the new signs will begin before the 2014-15 Fire Danger Period.

The automated signs are supported by a network of more than 350 static signs across the state.

EMERGENCY BROADCASTERS

The Victorian Government has formal arrangements for the broadcast of warnings and information with ABC Local Radio, commercial radio stations across Victoria, designated community radio stations and Sky News television.

During emergencies, Victoria's Emergency Broadcasters are required to interrupt normal broadcasting to relay emergency warnings. They also broadcast information, including updates and community alerts, to help the public make informed decisions based on advice provided by the emergency services.

Emergency Broadcasters were surveyed following the 2013-14 Fire Danger Period to inform ongoing improvements to the program.

VIC EMERGENCY WEBSITE

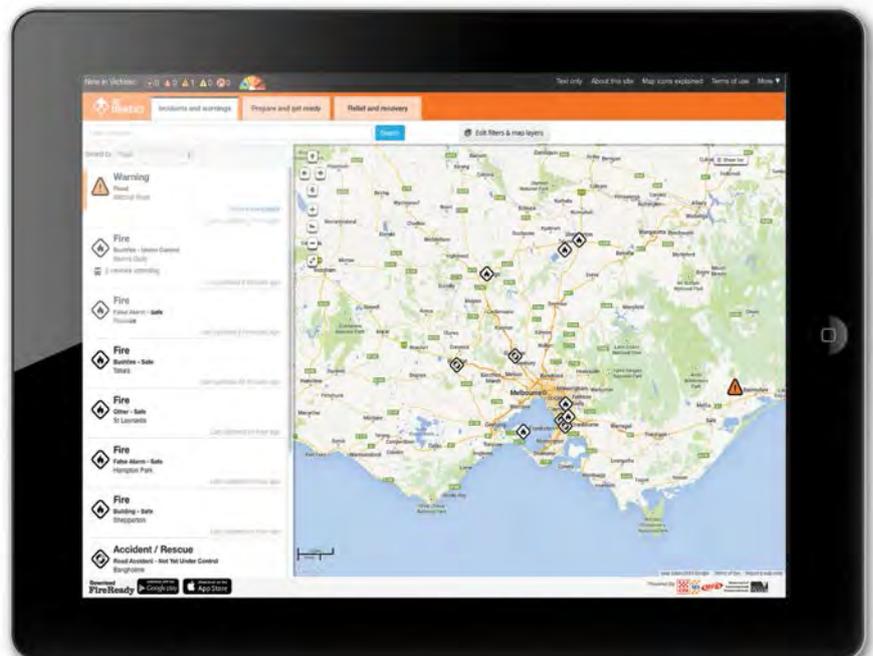
The 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission and the Review of the 2010-2011 Flood Warnings and Response called for a single emergency web portal to provide Victorian communities with information and warnings for all emergencies.

In response, a new emergency information website, VicEmergency, was launched in December 2013.

The website currently includes information on fire and flood warnings and in the future the site will be extended to include other emergencies.

It provides a single source for Victorians to access critical information before an event (the preparation phase), at the time of an event, and after an event (the recovery phase).

From its launch in December to 30 June 2014, there were almost 5.9 million page visits to the site. Visits peaked in the week commencing 17 January 2014 with 1.8 million unique visitors and more than 2.6 million visits.



FIREREDY APP

The new FireReady smartphone app was launched in December 2013.

The new app retains the functions of the previous app, such as providing real-time warnings and information on Total Fire Bans and Fire Danger Ratings, while being able to withstand high demand. It is available for Apple and Android devices.

A feature of the app is its ability to send out 'push' notifications to users who nominate their own 'watch zones' based on location.

The app was rebuilt following issues during the 2012-13 fire season when it functioned slowly and froze, frustrating community members attempting to get emergency fire information. The new app was subject to stringent use and load testing before it was launched.

Between December 2013 and mid-March 2014, the new app was downloaded more than 564,000 times. During this time, the app pushed out more than 154 million incident notifications, 26.3 million warnings and over eight million Total Fire Ban and Fire Danger Rating notifications.

On the two busiest fire days in the 2013-14 summer (Sunday 9 and Monday 10 February, 2014), the app sent out more than 23.4 million push notifications including Total Fire Ban notifications, warnings and advice messages and incident information.

As at the end of June, the app had been downloaded 591,841 times.

The next iteration of the app will expand it to an all hazards app, additionally providing information and warnings about a range of events beyond fire. The existing platform was built to accommodate these developments.

SIRENS

The Fire Services Commissioner, in partnership with CFA, has commissioned research into the effectiveness of community alerting sirens.

The research will examine the effectiveness of sirens as a warning method by considering positioning, sound and range of audio alerting. It will also look at characteristics for successful use of sirens as a community alert method, such as optimum volume and distance from a siren for successful alerting. Where sirens sit in the spectrum of warning methods will also be investigated.

This research follows an evaluation of the sirens pilot, which was completed in 2014. The pilot program, initiated in September 2012, involved 46 separate sirens across 36 communities and 13 Municipalities. The evaluation indicated significant community support for the sirens and that using existing CFA infrastructure is an effective and efficient way to deliver a message.

Responsibility and management of sirens on behalf of the state is being transitioned from the Fire Services Commissioner to CFA.

FIRE SERVICES REFORM PROGRAM

COMMON DOCTRINE

The Common Doctrine Project is developing a standard approach to managing and responding to emergencies that improves how the emergency services work together to deliver community-focused outcomes.

Considerable progress has been made in defining a framework of common doctrine (e.g. Common Doctrine Hierarchy, Stakeholder Engagement Process) and the development of key pieces of doctrine. This has attracted strong support from a wide range of agency members.

The development of doctrine has progressed in three concurrent phases. The first of these piloted a standard multi-agency process of developing common doctrine in nine subject areas covering a range of hazard environments (e.g. evacuation, dynamic risk assessment).

The Common Doctrine Project is now completing phase two, which builds on the pilot by creating a high-level document that captures the fundamental principles that guide emergency management activities and apply across all hazard environments. During the next 12 months, the final phase will interpret these fundamental principles within specific risk environments (e.g. urban, storm and flood).

This work will form a sound basis for the production of further common doctrine to provide consistent and integrated service to the community and improve the safety of our emergency service personnel.

THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COMMON OPERATING PICTURE

In March 2014, the Fire Services Commissioner signed a licence agreement with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for the use of the Next Generation Incident Command System (NICS) as the platform to develop a common operating picture for dealing with emergencies in Victoria.

In Victoria, it will be called the "Emergency Management Common Operating Picture".

The platform is a sophisticated military strength web browser that produces rich, timely, cross-agency information as an online incident map.

The concept that it is built on fits with the Victorian Information Network for Emergencies (VINE) strategy – to put in place the systems, standards and tools to enable everybody involved to make the best possible decisions using a common operating picture.

Benefits include:

- Delivery of a common platform that allows people in a control centre to view the same information, from many sources, as soon as it is uploaded
- Increased access to a wide range of organisations which can contribute to a common operating picture
- Capacity to be quickly scaled up depending on the emergency and used across all hazards and events
- Flexibility, allowing other current information products (e.g. eMaps) to plug into it.

STATE FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES TRAINING FRAMEWORK

The State Fire and Emergency Services Training Framework lays the foundation for joined up fire and emergency services training and exercising in Victoria.

The framework aims to make the most effective use of the state training facilities managed by a range of agencies.

This model of sharing and maximising use of facilities supports an 'all hazards' approach to training and exercising, and maximises public benefit and return on investment.

Victorian Emergency Management Training Centre - Craigieburn

The new Victorian Emergency Management Training Centre at Craigieburn opened in May 2014 and heralds the start of the new joined up approach to training centres across Victoria.

The centre provides state of the art equipment and facilities to meet the training requirements for all emergency services employees and volunteers.

The centre will maximise return on the investment made by the state in training and exercising facilities and mobile props.

It will achieve this through the increased use of these sites by representatives from the emergency management agencies to build state capability and capacity and improved service delivery.

It is one of a network of Victorian Emergency Management Training Centre campuses across Victoria.

2021 RESEARCH PROGRAM

The 2021 Research Program is focused on identifying environmental trends and drivers of change across the community.

Three environmental scans exploring issues and changes across three fundamental landscapes were completed and published in 2013-14. These were:

- Report 1: Agriculture, public land, private land
- Report 2: Peri-urban, regional, commercial and industrial
- Report 3: Inner city residential, CBD, deep harbour, industry and ports.

The 2021 Research Program has also undertaken a suite of collaborative projects with agencies that explore changes occurring across the state, and communities' changing needs and expectations of emergency management.

Other engagement

The Fire Services Commissioner participated in the development and launch of the Victorian Climate Change Adaptation Plan, published in 2013. Continued commitment to the plan has occurred through a 'One Year On' update and other work programs.

The Fire Services Commissioner was an active member of the Victorian Centre for Climate Change Adaptation Research (VCCCAR), which came to a close on 30 June 2014. The FSC represented the Department of Justice on the Centre's whole of government board and co-hosted events.

DANDENONG RANGES LANDSCAPE BUSHFIRE PROJECT

The Dandenong Ranges Landscape Bushfire Project involved twelve areas of work to improve community safety and emergency management operations in the Dandenong Ranges landscape.

The Department of Environment and Primary Industries and Parks Victoria have produced two milestone reports as a result of this work: *Understanding Hazard and Risk in the Dandenong Ranges*; and *Fuel Management in the Dandenong Ranges*.

These reports will contribute to the development of bushfire management in the Dandenong Ranges as well as other high bushfire risk areas in Victoria

PREPARATION, PLANNING AND INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

PRE-SEASON BRIEFINGS

In the lead-up to the 2013-14 fire season, a pre-season briefing program was jointly developed and delivered by the Pre-Season Briefing Steering Committee, made up of representatives from Victoria's emergency services.

The pre-season briefings provided an opportunity for incident management teams and senior leadership personnel to gain an improved understanding of incident management arrangements.

The briefings focused on the following themes: evacuation; warnings and advice; traffic management including traffic management points; safety; initial attack and command; and control including transfer of control.

Sixteen regional briefings were held across the state with 1,230 attendees from fire and emergency management agencies.

Feedback from the committee and the post briefing survey supports the effectiveness of the program.

Key issues and emerging themes from the post-season debrief process will inform and influence the following season's pre-season briefing program.

STATE CONTROL CENTRE

The State Control Centre (SCC) is Victoria's primary control centre for the management of emergencies. During the 2013-14 financial year, the SCC was activated on 123 days.

Improvements to the SCC over the past 12 months include implementing or working towards addressing recommendations from the VBRC and the *Review of 2010-2011 Flood Warnings and Response*.

SCC management, under the leadership of the FSC, undertakes regular reviews of its operations as well as post fire season debriefs. Reviews have focused on improvements to collaboration, information flow, general operations, and emergency management interoperability.

Improvements to the SCC and sector engagement opportunities during 2013-14 have included:

- Developing and refining the consequence management and health and safety functions within the SCC
- Refurbishing the SCC to include a media conference room and a Resources and Logistics room

- Facilitating SCC tours for Victorian, interstate and international emergency management staff
- Facilitating training, exercising and briefing sessions for over 800 participants
- Live streaming of briefings to the emergency management sector
- Transition of the State Airdesk from the Department of Primary Industries to the FSC
- Developing and deploying the Emergency Management Portal (EMP) which brings together a collection of links that are tailored for roles being filled during emergencies. The portal allows access to Emergency Management Knowledge (EMK), a browser-based central information repository with common operational and reference information required during emergencies.



OPERATIONAL REVIEWS

The annual post fire season review ensures that lessons learned from fires and incidents are built into future operational processes and procedures. In addition, a separate review is being held of the Goongerah-Deddick Trail and Mt Ray-Boundary Track fires in east Gippsland, which raised a number of significant issues for the fire agencies and local communities. A number of other incidents and actions have been identified for separate review outside of the business as usual process.

2013/14 Post Season Operations Review

The 2013-14 Post Season Operations Review involved a collaborative assessment of operations across the sector. The intent was to capture key learnings for implementation before the next summer season.

Review outcomes will be incorporated into pre-season briefings for 2014-15, exercising programs, the new edition of the *Victorian Bushfire Handbook and the 2014-15 Pre-season Update*.

Victoria's first formal evacuation order presented an opportunity to review evacuation arrangements. Victoria Police is leading a multi-agency review into the arrangements and the State Review Team is developing materials on key learnings for the sector. The principles of evacuation will continue to be reinforced before the next season through briefings, exercises and scenarios.

The review identified a range of improvements for the delivery of community information. These include developing the capability and capacity of Public Information personnel, investigating capacity to display existing warnings and advice messaging in map form, the need to reinforce meanings of warnings within the community, and the requirement for state-level media information about fire and weather conditions across Victoria.

Emergency management agencies and the community identified the need for further improvements to Traffic Management Points (TMPs), which help safeguard the community and emergency management personnel during fires. Two working groups are being established to address TMP issues involving primary producers (including property access and animal welfare) and road management.

Further operational themes where areas for improvement have been identified include transfer of control between incident control centres, the particular challenges of dealing with fires on the urban fringe, warnings and information, aircraft efficacy, the role of regional control, and resourcing.

Goongerah and Mt Ray reviews

A review was commissioned into the circumstances around the Goongerah-Deddick Trail and Mt Ray-Boundary Track fires which affected far East Gippsland communities including Bonang, Deddick, Goongerah, Tubbut, Glenaladale and Lindenow for months.

Fire burned tens of thousands of hectares and destroyed homes, other buildings, livestock and fencing, impacting the communities and causing significant concern around the management of the fires.

The Fire Services Commissioner, who is an independent statutory officer, initiated the reviews under Section 10 (i) of the Fire Services Commissioner Act 2010.

The Commissioner, with senior representatives of CFA and DEPI, has met with community members as a starting point to the reviews.

The reviews enable objective consideration of what occurred in order to promote improvements in fire and emergency management arrangements into the future.

Other Specific Reviews

A number of other incidents and activities were been identified for specific review outside of the business as usual process. These include:

- Warrandyte - Fire fighting in the Urban-Rural Interface
- Mt Ray Fire (Gippsland) - Growth and Fire Behaviour
- East Gippsland and Mallee Complexes - Managing priorities
- Mickleham-Kilmore - Transfer of Control
- Halls Gap Experience - Evacuation Planning and Implementation.

PREPARATION, PLANNING AND INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

STATE AIRFLEET

During the 2013-14 summer season, 42 fleet aircraft were used over nearly 10,000 hours for fire fighting operations in Victoria. There were 1,675 dispatches. Of these, 69 were on the busiest day (9 February 2014).

The fleet included 24 helicopters and 18 fixed wing aircraft including two Erickson Aircranes, capable of carrying 7,500 litres of water or foam, and two Sikorsky S61 helicopters that can carry 3,500 litres. An additional 150 aircraft were on-call when needed. Aircraft from New South Wales were also used on several occasions, including the Mickleham-Kilmore fire.

The two Aircranes flew in excess of 160 hours collectively and assisted ground crews in fighting all the major fires including the Grampians, Kilmore-Mickleham, East Gippsland fires and also spent some time at the Hazelwood mine fire in the early stages. Victoria also made use of a third Aircrane from NSW for the busiest part of the fire season under the National Aerial Firefighting Centre Commonwealth lease agreements, which allows aircraft to be moved around Australia to support firefighting efforts.

A new approach to dispatching aircraft was taken in five areas during the 2013-14 summer. Under the quick dispatch system, when a fire was reported on a high fire danger day and met certain criteria, a pager message was sent directly to the pilot and the Air Attack Supervisor initiating aircraft dispatch rather than waiting for aircraft to be requested by the Incident Controller. The system was trialled successfully in 2012-13 at Bendigo.

Another airborne intelligence platform that was used extensively throughout the season was the line scan aircraft. In addition to its use over bushfires, it was used extensively during the Hazelwood Open Cut Mine Fire to provide intelligence relating to the extinguishment progress of the mine batters.





POLICY, PLANNING, ENGAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

POWERLINE SAFETY

The Fire Services Commissioner has continued to provide executive leadership and technical expert opinion as a key stakeholder of the Powerline Bushfire Safety Oversight Committee, (chaired by the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet) and in the identification of priority areas for infrastructure deployment within the areas of highest consequence risk.

Working with the Department of State Development, Business and Innovation, the FSC furthered this work during the 2013/14 reporting year. These actions remain critical to the continued strong infrastructure deployment progress being made by government, leading to measurable reductions in bushfire risk outcomes for Victorian communities.

BUSHFIRE SAFETY POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Bushfire Safety Policy Framework (BSPF) is the vehicle for improving community bushfire safety for all Victorians. It guides the new approach to community bushfire safety as recommended by the VBRC.

The Framework is reviewed and evaluated annually, taking into account the lessons and experiences from the previous fire season, together with other bushfire safety developments and research.

The 2013 Bushfire Safety Policy Framework reflects further evolution of our approach. The Framework provides a sound and clear statement of what we need to do to achieve the goal of a safer and more resilient community.

The most recent review examined the extent to which the BSPF supported effective community response in three significant fires during the 2012-13 fire season. This involved interviews with householders affected by three significant fires and input from various agencies, organisations and government departments with responsibilities for bushfire safety identified valuable lessons about how to improve our approach.

This work highlighted a number of areas for improvement that are now the focus for ongoing work. These include better tailoring programs to address the needs of different groups in the community, further improvements to warnings issued during fires and further consideration of how to improve safety and shelter options in communities at risk from fire.

Actions to address the issues identified by the review of fires during 2012-13 were reflected in the approach to the 2013-14 education and engagement program, the revision of warning messages, and the development of improved ways to issue warnings.

Further work has commenced to investigate ways to improve safety and shelter options, and to produce guidance on ways to work with local communities to develop local plans and actions to address the bushfire risk.



SHELTER OPTIONS:

Community Fire Refuges

As part of the implementation of the Community Fire Refuges policy, community fire refuges were piloted at two school sites in the Yarra Ranges Shire and a co-located CFA fire station and community fire refuge at Blackwood in Moorabool Shire.

The purpose of the pilot was to test the policy, practices and procedures for operation developed around the provision of the refuges, including community understanding and involvement.

All three community fire refuge sites were endorsed by the Fire Service Commissioner as fit for use and designated by the respective councils ahead of the last Fire Danger Period.

Building works for the two Yarra Ranges sites – located in schools – were completed in November 2013.

The Blackwood co-located CFA fire station and Community Fire Refuge was completed in December 2013.

The pilot refuges have informed the creation of national performance standards and a design and construction handbook for building refuges across Australia.

A community fire refuge at Millgrove will become Victoria's fourth refuge. Millgrove has been identified as a high bushfire risk area characterised by limited access and limited shelter options for the community.

The co-located Millgrove community fire refuges and fire station is planned as part of the CFA capital works program. The facility will be based on the design and lessons from the co-located CFA station and community fire refuge at Blackwood.

Neighbourhood Safer Places

Over the 2013-14 summer period, 13 further NSPs were created, bringing the total number across Victoria to 281 (as of 12 March 2014).

Progress has been made to create NSPs in the most difficult locations around Victoria:

- Two NSPs were completed and designated in Cardinia Shire at Emerald and Cockatoo ahead of the 2013-14 fire danger period in that area. These were funded through an allocation to the Shire from the FSC
- The Golden Plains Council has submitted a fresh proposal for the development of an NSP at Dereel centred on the building of a new CFA fire station. This proposal is under consideration
- Further consultation with Colac-Otway on the future of \$1.2 million in available funding for shelter options in the Shire has yet to occur.



POLICY, PLANNING, ENGAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

INTEGRATED FIRE MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Integrated Fire Management Planning brings together a range of agencies and organisations in fire to ensure a more integrated approach to planning.

Implementation of eight regional and 67 municipal fire management plans (which also cover the Victorian Alpine Resorts) is well underway.

This planning is supported by the introduction of a monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement process. This process is currently being rolled out across the state to track the delivery and effectiveness of planning activities.

The community has online access to fire management plans for each region, municipal district or alpine resort.

A new website will be launched in August 2014 for fire and emergency management planning committee members to share information and report on the progress of planning activities. Development of an electronic spatial mapping platform to increase sharing of information has now been completed and will be tested over the next 12 months.

The State Fire Management Planning Committee has endorsed the next steps in its Strategic Directions for Fire Management Planning 2013, which is accompanied by an action plan, clearly describing new activities and timeframes. The functions of integrated fire management planning will transition into Emergency Management Victoria, and continue under the Emergency Management Planning Team, Risk and Resilience Directorate.

COMMUNITY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLANNING

A community emergency management planning approach and framework have been developed and piloted in the Harrietteville community.

The objective of the framework is for Victoria's emergency management organisations and communities to work together in achieving the vision of becoming safer and more resilient.

With a focus on natural hazards, the framework help emergency management organisations to coordinate their expertise, skills and resources to work together with communities, government and other organisations in an "all hazards - all agencies" approach. Similarly, the framework supports local community representatives and their networks to offer local knowledge, expertise and resources when working with emergency management organisations and to develop solutions for local priority risks.

The framework supports the capture of information and goals generated through these processes promoting investment and integration with other projects. Most important will be the ability to evolve, monitor progress and inform decision making processes at municipal, landscape, regional and State levels before, during and after emergency events.

An external evaluation of the local Harrietteville pilot supports the use of these collaborative processes and the framework will be further developed for broader application and use with other communities.

RESEARCH

Victoria, led by the Fire Services Commissioner, played a significant role in promoting the formation of the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre (BNHCRC). The new centre commenced operation on 1 July 2013.

The BNHCRC is the effective successor to the Bushfire CRC, which generated transition the legacy of a decade of bushfire and emergency management research. The new CRC aligns with Victoria's "all hazards" approach to emergency management by broadening the collective national research efforts to embrace the range of natural hazards that also affect Victoria, notably flooding.

The Fire Services Commissioner continued to serve on the Board of the Bushfire CRC in 2013-2014. Craig Lapsley was appointed to the Board of the BNHCRC in February 2014.

Representatives of the Fire Services Commissioner are directly involved in the BNHCRC as "end users" of the Governance and Institutional Knowledge research project cluster and two of two individual research projects, 'National Disaster Resilience Index' and 'Mapping and understanding bushfire and natural hazard vulnerability and risks at the institutional scale'.

Beyond the CRC, the Fire Services Commissioner has direct involvement in other individual research projects funded through the Australian Research Council. These include:

- Resilient information systems for disaster response
- Defining bushfire risk and resilience in the everyday landscape: knowledge, communication and practice.

SECTOR-WIDE LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The Fire Services Commissioner supports events throughout the year that promote and drive sector-wide information sharing and learning. In 2013-14 these included providing Victoria's emergency management sector with local opportunities to learn from international experience.

The Fire Services Commissioner once again sponsored the 13th annual Emergency Management Conference, held in July 2013. Themed 'Preparing Victoria', the conference focused on how the ever-changing emergency management environment continues to challenge the sector. The conference provided an opportunity to exchange of the valuable information gained by emergency services workers in the line of duty, and in research.

The Control Line Conference in October 2013 was designed to provide participants with a range of skills and knowledge to undertake day-to-day and operational leadership roles. The conference, themed 'Leaders of Leaders', featured Craig Lapsley and keynote speaker General George W. Casey Jr., former Chief of Staff, United States Army and Commander, Multi-National Force - Iraq.

The two-day Emergency Services Foundation (ESF) Volunteer Leaders' Forum in May 2014 exposed current and future leaders from Victorian emergency service organisations and related non-government organisations to a range of initiatives and developments in emergency management. The conference promoted the latest in policy, doctrine and technology to better prepare the sector's response to emergencies and inform better outcomes for the community.

The Executive Consequence Management Course continues to drive the all-hazards, all-emergencies model of emergency management in strategic leaders within Victoria's emergency management sector. In 2013-14, five programs were undertaken with 127 participants from a range of business, agency, community and government departments.

"The Fire Services Commissioner supports events throughout the year that promote and drive sector-wide information sharing and learning"



GOVERNANCE

The Governor in Council appointed Craig Lapsley as Victoria's first Fire Services Commissioner in October 2010.

The Fire Services Commissioner is supported by a small team of specialists who are appointed by the Commissioner but employed by the Department of Justice. For the purposes of their work for the Commissioner, the staff work independently of the Department.

Finances

The Fire Services Commissioner budget is derived from Department of Justice appropriation and through the same sources as MFB and CFA.

The Commissioner, through the Department of Justice, administers budgets covering:

- the FSC office
- the SCC
- Integrated Fire Management Planning
- Grants for establishment of shelter options

The Department of Justice Budget Papers do not apply specific budgetary objects or output to the Commissioner, however all expenditure is recorded within a separately identified cost centre.

Statutory Disclosures

Statutory disclosures are detailed in the 2013/14 Annual Report of the Department of Justice.

Staff

The Fire Services Commissioner is committed to applying merit and equity principles when appointing staff. The selection processes employed by the Commissioner ensures that applicants are assessed and evaluated fairly and equitably on the basis of key selection criteria and other accountabilities without discrimination. At 30 June there were 13 full-time positions including the Commissioner within the Fire Services Commissioner office.

13 positions within the FSC office

Age	Male	Female	Classification	Male	Female
20-24	0	0	VPS3	0	1
25-34	0	1	VPS4	0	1
35-44	0	2	VPS5	0	1
45-54	4	0	VPS6	6	2
55-64	4	2	EO3*	1	0
Over 64	0	0	Statutory Office Holder	1	0
Total	8	5	Total	8	5

*EO Secondment



SCC
DUTY
MANAGER

STATE CONTROL CENTRE

CENTRE

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