

year in brief

Section 3

SAMPLE OF EMERGENCIES RESPONDED TO AND MAJOR PREVENTION ACTIVITIES



YEAR IN BRIEF

SAMPLE OF EMERGENCIES RESPONDED TO AND MAJOR PREVENTION ACTIVITIES

When not responding to emergency calls, which can range from major fires in chemical factories, highrise buildings or bushland, through to a person trapped in a wrecked car following a road accident or a spillage of highly toxic substances, NSWFB staff are working hard either to prevent such emergencies, or preparing to deal with them.

Australia's busiest fire and rescue service is a well-oiled machine, ready to go into action 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Operators at the four inter-linked communication/dispatch centres answer 000 emergency calls and automatic fire alarms within seconds, and the advanced computer-aided-dispatch system (FireCAD) recommends what resources to send, then automatically alerts fire officers.

In country areas, most NSWFB stations are staffed by retained fire officers, who are alerted by phone and pager then respond to the fire station. In the major cities and towns, full-time fire officers are alerted by lights and alarms at the fire station, or by two-way radio when working on community safety or pre-planning exercises.

For every conceivable type of emergency, there is a predetermined response that statistics show

can usually handle the situation. When the first fire engine, which always has a team of four fire officers, comprising a commander and crew of three, arrives on the scene, the commander conducts a rapid 'size up' of the situation, and if necessary, sends a priority radio message (Code Red) calling for more help. As an incident escalates, senior officers who manage the service on a day-to-day basis respond to manage the emergency, not unlike a well-organised military operation.

As an incident progresses, non-uniformed support staff and resources are often called upon to put aside their administrative and other duties to work in critical support functions such as the Logistics Support Directorate, or at the Major Incident Coordination Centre. When the incident is under control, the NSWFB goes into recovery mode, helping victims and businesses to get back on their feet.

A 'normal' day for a fire officer includes routine equipment checks and servicing, studies for promotion, training sessions, pre-incident planning, public education, and fitness training. All of this is put aside the moment an emergency call is received, so that help is sent as quickly as possible.





13-21 JULY 2008

WORLD YOUTH DAY, SYDNEY

World Youth Day 2008 attracted more than 500 000 visitors, including 120 000 international visitors. More than 460 NSWFB fire officers were kept busy responding to a range of incidents at key sites during this week-long event, while NSWFB logistics, fleet, communications, IT and finance staff provided support. For example, during the Saturday night Vigil Mass at Randwick Racecourse, fire crews responded to 12 fires involving candles, bedding and campfires; 10 medical assists requiring first aid and transportation; and multiple hazmat incidents such as leaking gas cylinders and toilets overflows.



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DECEMBER 2008

LIGHT PLANE CRASHES INTO HOUSE AT CASULA

A single engine Cessna light plane crashed into the rear of a house in Casula. Responding fire officers sprayed foam to prevent aviation fuel catching fire; isolated all power to the site and tested for gas leaks, searched the premises for people trapped or injured; and established collapse zones as the house's structure had been badly damaged. Tragically both occupants of the aircraft were found dead and extrication was postponed until air crash investigations could be carried out. Fire crews also assisted Police officers in checking whether nearby houses were also damaged by the falling debris.





**02 JUNE
2009**

TRAWLER SINKS AT EVANS HEAD, LEAKING FUEL AND OIL

A 15m fishing trawler rolled over and partly submerged in Evans Head Boat Harbour. Responding fire officers positioned inflatable booms around the vessel to contain the leaking fuel and oil. The remaining fuel was pumped out and sump oil was removed from the harbour surface by skimmer pumps for safe disposal. A 40-tonne crane was used to right the vessel onto an even keel, and enough water was pumped from the vessel to allow its removal. Fire crews assisted in final cleanup of the harbour and surrounding shoreline. All agencies involved worked together to successfully avert significant environmental damage to the harbour area and its foreshore.



THROUGHOUT THE BUSHFIRE SEASON

COMMUNITY FIRE UNITS PREPARE THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITIES TO FACE BUSHFIRE THREAT

Community Fire Units (CFUs) are groups of local residents in high-risk urban/bushland interface areas who have been trained and equipped to participate in hazard reduction, prepare their own properties and those of their neighbours, and promote fire safety and prevention in their communities. During 2008/09, CFU Training Days were held regularly at key locations throughout the State and attracted big crowds.





FIRE OFFICERS TEACH VITAL FIRE SAFETY MESSAGES TO CHILDREN

During 2008/09, NSWFB fire officers delivered more than 2700 FireED and PreED presentations to primary schools and preschools. These programs taught fire safety practices and behaviours to young children which could save the lives of them and those of their families. Easily-understood safety messages such as 'Get Down Low and Go, Go, Go!' were taught to children attending kindergarten and Year 1 in primary schools, with a modified version of FireED called PreED used in preschools



FEBRUARY 2009

NSWFB FIRE OFFICERS HELP FIGHT DEVASTATING VICTORIAN BUSHFIRES

425 NSWFB fire officers from as far afield as Tweed Heads and Temora headed south to assist Victorian fire crews in combating the devastating fires sweeping that State. In all, NSWFB provided eight deployments to Victoria, each made up of more than 50 firefighters. Working under extreme and dangerous conditions, they joined with other Victorian and interstate fire service personnel to help bring the raging fires under control, extinguishing spot fires and carrying out property protection, patrols and containment operations.





30
MARCH
2009

1000 PEOPLE EVACUATED AFTER EXPLOSION AT BONDI JUNCTION

NSWFB fire officers helped to evacuate more than 1000 people following an explosion at the Eastgate Shopping Centre in Bondi Junction. The busy commercial centre consists of numerous shops as well as two 30-storey highrise residential buildings. The explosion occurred in a plant room on the 30th floor. The force of the blast was so fierce that all doors on the upper floors were blown off their hinges while some walls were completely destroyed. Fire crews searched the upper levels of the building for casualties, with fire officers carrying many elderly residents down more than 20 storeys to safety.



03
APRIL
2009

PROMOTING FIRE SAFETY AT THE NSWFB OPEN DAY

On the NSWFB's annual Open Day, around 60 000 people visited fire stations across the State to see what goes on behind the scenes in Australia's busiest fire and rescue service. Fire crews gave talks and demonstrations on fire safety in the home, and advised families how to prepare home escape plans. Many crews set up safety displays and staged demonstrations of firefighting equipment such as fire extinguishers and fire blankets. Key safety messages delivered this year were smoke alarms, home escape plans and Triple Zero. A large number of safety brochures and fact sheets were distributed.





21 APRIL 2009

SEMITRAILER CRASHES ON F3 FREEWAY

In a serious accident on the Sydney-to-Newcastle F3 freeway, a semitrailer smashed through a safety barrier and plunged to the bottom of a very steep ravine, 100m from the road. Two heavy-duty towtrucks were brought in, using large steel cables to stabilise the truck and ensure the safety of rescue personnel. Fire officers abseiled down into the ravine to search for survivors and plan any rescue required. Sadly, they discovered that the driver had died in the crash. They used heavy hydraulic cutting equipment to free his body from the wreckage, working in difficult terrain and conditions for six hours. They were assisted throughout the operation by Police and Ambulance services, and received aerial support to transport equipment to the site.

MAY 2009

SEVERE STORMS CAUSE MASSIVE FLOODS ON NSW'S MID AND NORTH COAST

Severe storms swept through NSW's Mid and North Coast in May 2009, bringing flash flooding, destructive winds and dangerous surf. Additional NSWFB strike teams were sent to the area to assist local crews and the SES with flood and storm response operations. Fire officers responded to a wide range of incidents, including people trapped in cars and homes, motor vehicle accidents, fallen trees and powerlines, and damaged roofs. They helped to evacuate residents threatened by rising floodwaters and assisted in the massive cleanup afterwards.



09 FEBRUARY 2009

STUDENTS AND STAFF RESCUED FROM MOSS VALE SCHOOL FIRE

Fire crews were called to St Paul's International School in Moss Vale when a fierce blaze tore through the school's workshop and storeroom and began threatening a small chapel above the workshop. After evacuating 177 students and 46 staff from the building, fire officers fought the blaze, bringing it under control within 50 minutes. Fortunately no-one was injured in the fire, and all students and staff were able to return to their classrooms once the fire was extinguished.