



Section 4

## COMMUNITY SAFETY

Prevention and  
Community Preparedness

performance



## Objectives

TO REDUCE THE NUMBER AND SEVERITY OF EMERGENCY INCIDENTS, DEATHS, INJURIES AND PROPERTY DAMAGE IN THE COMMUNITY THROUGH EFFECTIVE PREVENTION, PREPAREDNESS AND ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS

TO HELP PEOPLE PREPARE FOR EMERGENCIES BY BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY AND RESILIENCE

## Priorities

- Address the safety needs of key at-risk community groups
- Run effective community education events and campaigns
- Establish and support station-based community preparedness, prevention and engagement activities by local fire officers
- Develop strategic partnerships to enhance community safety
- Increase community and business preparedness and resilience to emergencies
- Provide regulatory, advisory, inspection and investigation services
- Research, identify and address major community risks

## Highlights

- In partnership with other agencies and organisations, used legislation reinforced by public education to further increase the proportion of NSW homes with smoke alarms from 92.9% to 93.6%
- Increased business preparedness for emergencies by delivering 1431 workplace emergency management training courses to more than 21 000 participants
- Conducted specialist investigations into 319 fires and explosions, and determined the cause in 72% of these incidents
- Through the Smoke Alarm Battery Replacement for the Elderly program, visited the homes of 9384 seniors and at-risk group members to install smoke alarms or check batteries
- Increased road safety awareness among young drivers by delivering 94 RescueEd presentations to high school students
- Delivered FireEd and PreEd child fire safety education in 2891 visits to primary schools and preschools
- Launched the Aboriginal Resources Intranet Kit to raise staff awareness about Aboriginal culture and experience
- Helped to ensure a safer built environment by carrying out 531 inspections in commercial, industrial and residential buildings
- Increased the number of Community Fire Units to 418 now involving over 5800 volunteers, and thus increasing community preparedness for bushfires
- Began sending reminder letters to every home where fire officers had responded to a fire and had noticed that smoke alarms were absent or not working
- Established the Fire Fatality Analysis Committee to review all fire deaths at incidents attended by the NSWFB and identify lessons which could be learnt from these tragic accidents
- Promoted community safety through Fire Prevention Week, BrigadeKids Day, Open Day and other community programs in partnership with McDonald's, GIO and other sponsoring partners



## Future directions

- Implement the objectives and strategies outlined in the NSWFB's Community Safety Plan 2008–2011
- Improve community risk profiling tools to assist fire officers in better identifying these at-risk groups within their communities
- Use research and improved technology and information-gathering to identify hazards and at-risk groups, allowing better targeting of prevention programs
- Develop further our strategic partnerships with other NSW Government agencies such as Housing NSW, Department of Education and Training and the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care to improve fire safety for at-risk groups
- Develop the RetireEd concept and program which uses retired fire officers to deliver fire safety messages and programs to seniors groups
- Revise and improve community education and information campaigns on bushfire safety in association with the Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council (AFAC) and other fire services around Australia
- Work with the NSW Police Force, NSW Rural Fire Service, State Emergency Service and Emergency Management NSW to provide the most effective community safety programs within the new Police and Emergency Services portfolio
- In cooperation with the NSW Department of Planning, Office of Fair Trading, local councils, Association of Accredited Certifiers, Standards Australia, Fire Protection Association of Australia and other stakeholders, develop a system to ensure compliance with and maintenance of annual fire safety statements
- In association with AFAC and other fire services throughout Australia, develop a policy on residential sprinkler systems



Community prevention and preparedness programs focus on engaging the community and other partners to increase awareness of risk and to deliver measurable improvements in community safety by building resilience.

## Key service measures

SERVICE MEASURES	UNITS	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Building inspections undertaken	number	N/A	1170	1022	724	531
Fires with ignition factor determined	%	71.2	71.2	71.7	68.8	69.3
Community fire units established	number	282	315	351	374	418
ComSafe emergency management courses conducted	number	1543	1758	1987	1831	1431
Hours fire officers spent delivering community safety activities and programs	hours	N/A	N/A	22 391	22 399	32 403
Smoke alarm reminders issued to residents	number	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	628
Fire officers with approved advanced first aid qualification	number	2347	1782	1566	2548	1685

## Address the safety needs of key at-risk community groups

Research shows that some segments of the community are at greater risk from fire and other emergencies than the general population. As well as running general broad based safety programs, the NSWFB also identifies and targets at-risk groups with specially tailored community safety campaigns.

Community risk profiles have been developed for all areas serviced by the NSWFB. This enables fire crews to better understand and target safety hazards and at-risk groups in their local communities using web-enabled tools.

## Children and young people

### FireEd and PreEd Fire Safety Education

Young children are a key at-risk group. The NSWFB's FireEd program teaches young children fire safety practices and behaviours which could save their lives and those of their families. Easily understood safety messages such as 'Get Down Low and Go, Go, Go' are taught to children attending Kindergarten and Year 1 in primary schools. A modified version of FireEd called PreEd is used in preschools. FireEd and PreEd were sponsored by the Macquarie Bank Foundation.

During 2008/09, NSWFB fire officers delivered 2891 FireEd and PreEd presentations. We also carried out annual audits of these education programs to ensure quality control and continuous improvement.





## Intervention and Fire Awareness Program

Juvenile fire-lighting is recognised as a significant problem by fire agencies around the world. The NSWFB's Intervention and Fire Awareness Program (IFAP) aims to reduce the number and severity of fires started by children.

IFAP targets children up to 17 years of age who have been lighting fires. The program aims to stop this dangerous behaviour by educating these children about fire safety. IFAP services include home fire safety education; resources such as brochures and fact sheets; and strategies and advice tailored to specific needs in order to create a safer home environment. Trained staff also make home visits and carry out home fire safety audits, with follow-up calls to check if fire-lighting activities have stopped.

During 2008/09, IFAP received and managed 53 new referrals from fire officers at fire incidents or from concerned parents or carers. Parents and carers can access this free and confidential 24-hour service by calling 1800 600 700.

## Youth Justice Conferences

The *Young Offenders Act 1997* sets out procedures for using youth justice conferencing to deal with young people who commit certain offences. These conferences allow cautions and warnings to be issued rather than the young person being sentenced in a court hearing. They bring young offenders together with members of their community in order to encourage offenders to take responsibility for their actions and to help repair the harm which they have caused.

During the year, the NSWFB continued to participate in youth justice conferencing under the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding with the NSW Department of Juvenile Justice. The Department notified the NSWFB of fire-related youth justice conferences, giving us the opportunity to send a fire officer to participate in these where practicable. Offenders may be less likely to re-offend if they can talk with fire officers at such conferences and become aware of the consequences of lighting fires inappropriately.

## RescueED

The NSWFB is the largest provider of road accident rescue services in the State. As part of our focus on prevention, we deliver RescueEd, a road safety education program which aims to reduce the number of young people killed or injured on the State's roads. (In NSW, people under 26 are over-represented in fatal crashes, comprising 20% of all drivers and motorcycle riders involved in fatal crashes. Source: *Road Traffic Crashes in NSW*, NSW Centre for Road Safety, 2007). The RescueEd program is aimed at Years 7–10 students and features a car extrication demonstration, the video *Tim's Story*, and discussion of the causes and consequences of road accidents and how to prevent them.

During 2008/09, fire officers from NSWFB primary and secondary rescue crews delivered 94 RescueEd presentations to high school students. RescueEd was sponsored by the Macquarie Bank Foundation. Ongoing consultation with fire officers delivering this program is enabling further development and improvement of RescueEd.

## Youth Road Safety

The NSWFB again participated in the annual Australian Youth and Road Trauma Forum, a whole-of-government approach to youth road safety. The Forum's main aims are to reduce the fatality and injury rates of young people, and to raise community awareness of injury prevention and trauma care services and resources. Around 12 000 Years 10–12 students from over 100 schools attend the Forum each year. Officers from the NSWFB and other emergency services participated at this event in staging a crash simulation and demonstrating extrication of road accident victims.

During the year, fire officers were also involved in regional events to promote road safety, such as the Tamworth Young Drivers expo held in August 2008.

## Adopt-a-School Program

The trial of the Adopt-a-School Program is continuing in the Illawarra. This program is designed to improve fire safety in schools and to enhance links between local fire stations and schools. Participating fire crews visited their local schools regularly to identify and eliminate potential fire hazards, improve evacuation procedures, and deliver school fire safety education programs.



## Seniors

Older people are at greater risk from fires in the home compared to the rest of the population, with around one in three fire-related deaths in NSW occurring among people aged 65 years and over. (Source: NSWFB Fire Fatalities Report: Study of fatal fires in NSW from 2004 to 2008.)

The NSWFB worked closely with the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (DADHC) to develop and implement a seniors' fire safety campaign as part of Seniors Week 15–22 March 2009. This campaign featured demonstrations of the NSWFB's fat fire simulator at Darling Harbour and a fire safety display at the Sydney Entertainment Centre's Premier Gala Concert Series which was attended by 24 000 seniors.

Under the NSWFB's Smoke Alarm Battery Replacement for the Elderly (SABRE) program, local fire officers in many areas formed partnerships with local councils and community care organisations to install and maintain battery-operated smoke alarms for the elderly, helping them to live safely and independently in their own homes. SABRE also gave fire officers the opportunity to conduct on-site fire risk assessments and to identify hazards which need to be addressed. During the year, the NSWFB bought 12 000 photoelectric smoke alarms which were distributed to fire stations for use in their SABRE activities.

In 2008/09, fire officers participating in the SABRE program visited 9384 homes throughout the State to install new smoke alarms or to check previously installed alarms. In Wyong, for example, NSWFB staff set up a database to assist local fire stations in delivering SABRE annually to more than 1100 seniors in their region. The NSWFB also partnered with Blacktown Rotary Club to complete a three-year project to buy and install over 900 smoke alarms in the Blacktown area, and to change batteries where needed.

## Aboriginal communities

The NSWFB employs a full-time Aboriginal Services Officer to liaise and work with Indigenous groups, and to support and guide NSWFB staff. The officer works closely with Area and Zone Commanders, support staff and frontline fire officers to help develop relationships and partnerships with local Aboriginal communities.

During 2008/09 we strengthened relationships with Aboriginal communities across NSW and set up Community Fire Units where appropriate. We also continued to participate in a whole-of-government response to issues faced by local communities through Regional Coordination Management Groups.

Blacktown in Sydney's west has the largest Aboriginal population of any area in NSW. During the year, we continued our involvement in the Blacktown Aboriginal Safety Program which has successfully improved the safety of the local Indigenous population. The NSWFB helped to develop and introduce the Home Safe Home project which involves carrying out safety audits on Aboriginal Housing Office properties.

Throughout the year, we supported a number of major events held by the Aboriginal community. In July 2008, NSWFB fire crews participated in NAIDOC Week events throughout the State. We also attended the annual NSW Aboriginal Rugby League carnival at Tweed Heads, with Indigenous fire officers joining our Aboriginal Services Officer in distributing fire safety information to spectators and participants during the three-day event.

After signing a joint Statement of Commitment to Aboriginal Reconciliation in 2008 with the NSW Fire Brigade Employees' Union, the NSWFB began developing a Reconciliation Action Plan. This Plan aims to increase the capacity and resilience of Aboriginal communities in NSW to prepare for and prevent emergencies, to highlight employment opportunities for Aboriginal people within the NSWFB, and to ensure Aboriginal communities have the opportunity to participate in NSWFB activities and programs.

To support this commitment, in June 2009 the NSWFB published an Aboriginal Resources Intranet Kit which raises staff awareness about Aboriginal culture and experience from both an historical and a contemporary perspective. It also helps staff to better understand issues facing Aboriginal communities and to engage more effectively with these communities.





## Culturally and linguistically diverse communities

During 2008/09, we implemented various initiatives to promote fire safety awareness among culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities across NSW, in line with our Ethnic Affairs Priorities Statement Forward Plan (see Appendix 14). Our fire officers worked in partnership with local councils and other community organisations to engage with CALD groups, giving presentations on fire safety tailored to the needs of these groups. Key NSWFB CALD initiatives during the year included the following:

- Translated safety resources to make CALD community groups more aware of fire risks and better prepared to deal with emergencies. Brochures on fire safety and prevention for seniors, smoke alarms, and home fire safety were translated into eight languages (Spanish, Macedonian, Greek, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Vietnamese and Korean) and disseminated at CALD forums and activities.
- Completed a Fire Safety module which was incorporated in the NSW Adult Migrant English Service accredited Curriculum for Spoken and Written English. This module covers home escape plans, smoke alarms, fire safety and children, and the Triple Zero emergency number. This teaching resource makes CALD communities better prepared to deal with fires in the home and improves their understanding of fire risks. Free copies of the booklet were distributed to 7000 TAFE students and it is also available on the Internet.
- Participated in 18 Harmony Day events in 2009 across NSW, in both regional and metropolitan locations.
- Developed a CALD training resource to assist fire officers presenting to CALD audiences.
- Continued participation by Coffs Harbour fire officers in the New Entrant Orientation Program which Anglicare runs for newly-arrived migrants. Under this program, our staff trained migrants from CALD backgrounds to ring Triple Zero in an emergency (most are familiar with overseas emergency numbers which don't apply in Australia) and taught them about our role as an emergency service and how we protect the community.
- Participated in community events and gave presentations on fire safety to CALD groups at the Blacktown Migrant Resource Centre. (Blacktown has a large CALD population including Afghan, Burmese and Sudanese communities.)
- Worked closely with the Commonwealth Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) who fund service providers for CALD communities. During the year, DIAC funded inclusion of the NSWFB's winter and summer fire safety campaigns into the educational curriculum delivered by these providers in southern NSW.
- Appointed and trained more Community Fire Safety Volunteers, bringing the total number to 20. These volunteers from CALD communities use their language skills and cultural knowledge to spread fire safety messages to new migrants and community members with limited English language skills.



## Run effective community education events and campaigns

### Summer bushfire safety campaign

Over the summer of 2008/09, the NSWFB and the Rural Fire Service (RFS) ran a joint media campaign to raise public awareness of the importance of preparing homes for bushfires. The campaign included advertisements in city, suburban and regional newspapers. Three 30-second community service announcements, with voiceover by well-known actor Jack Thompson, were also broadcast on major metropolitan and regional radio networks.

### Mardi Gras Festival

On 7 March 2009 the NSWFB participated in the 30th Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade, which was watched by an estimated 300 000 spectators as well as a television audience of millions. Our contingent consisted of an offline fire engine and other vehicles, accompanied by around 100 NSWFB representatives including fire officers, administrative staff and Community Fire Unit members. Participation in the Parade enabled us to communicate key fire safety messages as well as reinforcing our commitment to equality and diversity in the workplace.

### Seniors Week

The NSWFB implemented a seniors fire safety campaign during Seniors Week which ran 15–22 March 2009. Across the State, fire officers promoted safety messages through their local media and carried out prevention activities in their communities. These activities provided many opportunities for NSWFB personnel to highlight fire safety issues affecting older people and explain how these risks can be prevented or reduced.

### Fire Prevention Week

According to 2008 Sweeney Research, 23% of NSW residents – almost one in every four people – have experienced a fire. NSWFB fire data also shows that fire deaths and injuries peak between May and August each year. Over half of all fires (53%) start in the kitchen; cooking (43%) is the single biggest cause of fires, followed by faulty electrical appliances/fittings (including heaters, air conditioners and electric blankets).

To tackle these trends, in 2009 the NSWFB introduced an annual Fire Prevention Week running from 26 April to 3 May, to encourage households to take steps to minimise the risk of a fire in their home during winter.





A special Fire Prevention Week supplement was produced and published in the Sun Herald on Sunday 26 April, reaching more than 1.4 million readers. The supplement was also published in the Illawarra Mercury and Newcastle Herald on Monday 27 April.

McDonald's was engaged as the Presenting Partner, celebrating Kids Day at its NSW Restaurants on 26 April to promote fire safety messages to children and families. Some 28 000 BrigadeKids CDs were produced and handed out free to customers by fire officers and McDonald's staff.

Fire Prevention Week concluded with Open Day, the NSWFB flagship event, with fire stations across the State opening their doors to the public, distributing fire safety materials and providing advice on safety issues.

### Awards for prevention programs

The 2007 national Triple Zero awareness campaign won the 2008 NSW Safer Communities Awards, and was highly commended at the National Awards. The NSWFB spearheaded this awareness campaign, and we accepted the award on behalf of all the agencies involved in the Triple Zero call-taking service. The Safer Communities Awards recognise best practice and innovation in emergency management.

### BrigadeKids CD/website

The NSWFB developed an interactive multimedia children's CD and website which incorporated games, puzzles, screensavers, singalong songs, quizzes, interviews, hyperlinks to websites, TV segments and safety materials. The aim of this initiative was to engage and educate children about home fire safety. The BrigadeKids CD and website also included advice for parents and teachers on how to educate children about fire safety. The CD was launched at Kids Day held on 26 April at McDonald's restaurants across the State.

### Winter fire safety campaign

Fire statistics show that winter is the peak period for house fires and deaths in fires. In June 2009, the NSWFB and the RFS launched a joint media campaign outlining the dangers of fires in the home during winter. Channel 9 partnered with the fire services in promoting smoke alarm awareness through a community service announcement produced and broadcast by the 9 Network. Television community service announcements were also broadcast throughout regional NSW. In addition, the NSWFB ran an eight-page winter fire safety feature in the Sun Herald, emphasizing the importance of escape plans and working smoke alarms.



## Museum of Fire

During the year, the NSWFB maintained its close partnership with the Museum of Fire at Penrith in western Sydney. The museum, which has around 50 000 visitors annually, carried out fire safety education by:

- providing a venue for major educational exhibitions in Sydney's western suburbs
- using displays and hands-on activities to provide a quality learning experience for visitors including local schools and community groups
- consulting with community groups on fire safety issues and their role in fire prevention, and
- acting as a resource centre for fire safety material for the community, as well as for research and study.

## Blacktown to Batemans Bay Variety Bash

In August 2008 the NSWFB again combined with the RFS to support a team in the Blacktown to Batemans Bay Variety Bash. Besides raising funds for the children's charity Variety, the team gave fire safety demonstrations and presentations at schools along the route across NSW, South Australia and Victoria.

## Establish and support station-based community preparedness, prevention and engagement activities by local fire officers

### Seasonal community safety campaigns

Throughout the year, the NSWFB produced and distributed seasonal fire safety sheets to all our fire stations, with a different safety focus each month. These seasonal campaigns enabled our fire officers to promote consistent safety messages across NSW through the media, as well as through activities organised in their local communities. Fact sheets were produced to support the safety messages. During 2008/09 we ran various safety campaigns, each focusing on risks specific to that season:

- **Spring:** electrical safety, household chemical safety, removal of household clutter, preparing for the bushfire season, barbecue and backyard safety
- **Summer:** festive season safety (particularly with lights and candles), caravan and camping safety, children and fire safety
- **Autumn:** Open Day, smoke alarm maintenance, 'Change Your Clock, Change Your Battery' awareness campaign, seniors fire safety
- **Winter:** Fire Prevention Week, winter fire safety, kitchen fire safety.







## 'Change your clock, change your battery' campaign

Fire deaths and injuries often occur when domestic smoke alarms are not working to alert occupants to the presence of fire. On 5 April 2009, a number of fire stations joined in promoting the 'Change Your Clock, Change Your Battery' campaign at Bunnings hardware stores. This campaign encouraged all members of the public, when they changed their clock at the end of daylight saving, to also check their smoke alarm batteries and replace any which were not working. The campaign achieved wide media coverage on TV, radio and the press. The national 'Change Your Clock, Change Your Battery' campaign was supported by Duracell and other Australian fire services.

## 2009 Open Day

The NSWFB's annual Open Day is a great opportunity for members of the community to see what goes on behind the scenes in Australia's busiest fire and rescue service. This year's Open Day was a big success with around 60 000 people visiting their local fire station on 3 May 2009 to learn more about the NSWFB and the services we provide to protect the community. Stations hosted a range of activities including rescue demonstrations, fire station tours and fire safety presentations. Key safety messages delivered this year were smoke alarms, home escape plans and Triple Zero. Over 20 000 show bags and 15 000 BrigadeKids CDs were distributed to visitors, along with fire safety fact sheets and brochures.

## Community events and local media

More than 52 000 community safety, preparedness and engagement activities were carried out by fire crews during the year – see Appendix 10: Reported Responses by Region, Zone and Brigade 2008/09 for details. NSWFB fire officers participated in a wide range of community activities to raise awareness about fire safety and prevention programs, supporting Community Fire Units and addressing local business groups, service clubs, schools and preschools, seniors groups and community organisations. They also set up displays, distributed safety materials and spread fire safety messages at key local community events such as the Firefighter Championships, Australia Day and other Festivals, Henty Machinery Field Day and local Emergency Services Expos. The fat fire simulator, which dramatically highlights the dangers of leaving cooking unattended, proved a real crowd puller when used at these displays and powerfully communicated kitchen fire safety messages.

Fire crews also worked closely with their local media, using TV, radio and the press in order to disseminate safety messages and publicise prevention activities.

## Develop strategic partnerships to enhance community safety

### Business partnership program

During the year, the NSWFB's sponsorship program was modified to reflect commercial marketing requirements and the NSW Government's Public-Private Partnership model. The NSWFB approached the business sector seeking suitable partners who have an affinity with our corporate values, who share the same customer/consumer base (in part or whole), and who have similar concerns and aspirations for community engagement and education.

New and existing partnerships were set up and maintained with suitable commercial organisations in order to deliver major prevention programs aimed at increasing public awareness of risk and improving community safety. Business partners engaged during 2008/09 included the following:

COMPANIES PARTNERING WITH THE NSWFB ON PREVENTION PROGRAMS	
Partners	Sponsorship level
McDonald's	Major community partner – three years Presenting partner – Fire Prevention Week Supporting sponsor – Community Fire Units
GIO	Major community partner – three years Presenting partners – several safety programs
Macquarie Bank Foundation	RescueEd and FireEd programs
Duracell	Presenting partner – 'Change your clock, change your smoke alarm battery' community education program Supporting sponsor – Smoke alarm battery replacement for the elderly program
Subaru Australia	Supporting sponsor – Culturally and linguistically diverse program
Fairfax	Supporting Sponsor – Fire Prevention Week
Eukanuba	Accelerant Detection Canine

### Partnership on public housing

Housing NSW is one of the world's largest providers of public housing, with more than 128 000 properties across NSW, making it one of our major stakeholders. Throughout the year, the NSWFB and Housing NSW continued working together to maintain high levels of fire safety in public housing.

### Partnership on community housing

During 2008/09, the NSWFB also worked with the Office of Community Housing to address increasing injuries and property losses caused by fires in many community housing projects throughout the State. We helped to facilitate safety forums involving emergency services, community housing corporations and insurance brokers for public housing. The forums developed a number of strategies to reduce the incidence of fires and minimise losses.

### Partnership on housing for people with disabilities

The NSWFB initiated and is a key stakeholder in a joint Fire Working Group with the NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (DADHC). In 2008/09, the NSWFB worked with DADHC to identify over 400 residential and community homes accommodating people with disabilities. These homes are highlighted in our computer-aided dispatch system, enabling fire officers to review and adjust their response procedures if they are called to any emergencies in these homes.

DADHC inserted a seniors' winter fire safety checklist in some their publications, and incorporated home fire safety information in the Seniors Week program which was distributed to all RSL clubs in NSW.



## Local government safety committees

In 2008/09, NSWFB fire officers participated in safety committees run by various local councils. This involvement enabled us to partner with and make recommendations to councils about community education activities which target fire and life safety issues.

## Fire investigation training

The expertise of the NSWFB's structure fire investigators is widely recognised, both locally and overseas. Within Australia, we shared our expertise with other agencies, delivering fire investigation training to the Australian Federal Police, ACT Fire Brigade Fire Investigators, NSW Police Arson Detectives and NSW Police Forensic Services Group. These courses were aimed at building inter-agency networks and raising the level of expertise in fire investigation in Australia. We also participated in Bushfire Investigation Training with the NSW Police Force and other fire agencies, and attended Arson Investigation and Bomb Scene Examiners courses run by the NSW Police Force.

Our skills were also in demand internationally, with the NSWFB partnering with the Australian Federal Police to train Indonesian and Iraqi Police in fire scene investigations and to improve their understanding of fire behaviour.

## Building code development and building fire safety

During the year the NSWFB, in conjunction with the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council and the NSW Department of Planning, continued to provide input and expertise on building code development to the Australian Building Codes Board. We also worked with other Government agencies to improve fire protection standards in buildings. This included ongoing work aimed at licensing technicians in their particular field of fire safety.

## Arson reduction and prevention

Throughout 2008/09 we met regularly with the RFS and the NSW Police Force in an inter-agency Arson Prevention Committee, which provided a forum for identifying, discussing and addressing arson-related issues. The Committee's activities included:

- sharing information between the agencies about deliberately lit fires
- developing uniform approaches to investigation, training and research
- developing prevention programs to address and reduce the incidence of fires at local, regional and State levels.

## Fire safety in public schools

To help reduce the incidence, severity and impact of fires in NSW public schools, the NSWFB continued to participate with the NSW Police Force and the NSW Department of Education and Training in a joint School Fire Working Group. This Group shared and analysed information about school fires in order to identify and prioritise schools with a high risk profile. It also examined the design of new and rebuilt school buildings from a fire safety perspective, as well as reviewing information on preparedness and recovery. Actions taken have contributed to school fires decreasing nearly 40% since 2004/05.



## Increase community and business preparedness and resilience to emergencies

### Commercial safety training

ComSafe, the NSWFB's commercial business unit, is a Registered Training Organisation which delivers a wide range of workplace emergency management training that goes beyond the 'community obligation' free services provided by the NSWFB. This training is delivered to commercial, industrial and healthcare organisations as well as other emergency services. The range of training programs includes basic fire, evacuation, first aid and hazardous material information, as well as specialist training such as fire team, breathing apparatus, confined spaces, working at heights and rescue training. This training increases business and industry awareness of possible workplace risks and emergencies, and heightens their ability to deal with these both before and after emergency services personnel arrive.

During 2008/09, ComSafe delivered 1431 training programs to more than 21 000 participants, maintaining ComSafe's position as a leading provider in the field of emergency prevention and preparedness training. Specialist training provided during the year included training in confined spaces, working at heights, hazardous materials spillage control, fire team and breathing apparatus.

Revenue available after covering ComSafe costs, was used to develop and deliver effective fire and emergency education programs to the community. A range of educational resources, including kitchen fat fire simulators and information brochures, CDs and banners, was also funded from this surplus revenue.

COMSAFE TRAINING SERVICES DELIVERY					
General training	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Basic programs	284	392	414	322	308
Training packages	277	306	315	281	204
Specialist programs	222	254	390	407	172 <sup>1</sup>
Confined spaces					78 <sup>1</sup>
Working at heights					26 <sup>1</sup>
First aid					14 <sup>1</sup>
Industry-specific programs					
Healthcare	718	774	825	781	625
Childcare	10	8	3	6	4
Hospitality/tourism	17	24	26	16	N/A <sup>2</sup>
Transport	14	0	8	7	N/A <sup>2</sup>
Mining	1	0	6	11	N/A <sup>2</sup>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1543</b>	<b>1758</b>	<b>1987</b>	<b>1831</b>	<b>1431</b>

#### Notes:

1. Confined Spaces, Working at Heights and First Aid courses are listed separately in 2008/09, thus reducing numbers in the Specialist Programs category.
2. Hospitality/Tourism, Transport and Mining courses are included in the 2008/09 general course numbers.





## OTHER COMSAFE SERVICE DELIVERY

	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Consultations	22	65	72	76	29
Evacuation exercises	36	12	10	9	39
Fire safety advice/materials provided	283	236	248	253	219
Hire of training facilities (number of occasions)	18	14	16	18	26
Media activities (film/TV requests)	11	1	7	8	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>364</b>	<b>326</b>

## Community fire units

Community Fire Units (CFUs) are an integral part of the NSWFB's public education and risk management strategy in bushfire prone urban areas. The CFU program trains and equips residents in bushfire prone urban areas to prepare their homes for the summer fire season and to reduce their bushfire risk.

The NSWFB set up the CFU program in response to the devastating bushfires which occurred in Sydney in 1994. Since then, the program's effectiveness has been repeatedly demonstrated, with CFUs credited with defending their homes when bushfires threaten.

As at 30 June 2009, there were 418 CFUs installed across metropolitan and regional NSW, operated by more than 5800 volunteer members. Both the Commonwealth and State Governments have provided funding to establish new units and support existing ones. During the year, targeted community engagement and recruitment activities, which included mailouts and information sessions, were conducted on the Central Coast, Blue Mountains, Southern Highlands and western and northern Sydney regions, as well as in major centres on the south coast and mid north coast. This campaign attracted an additional 805 residents to the CFU program across 157 units.

Throughout the year, the NSWFB ran induction training events to teach new CFU members about bushfire behaviour, property preparation and protection, safe working practices and equipment use. Existing CFU members were given ongoing training to ensure that they were operating safely and that their skills were kept up-to-date with current practices. We also involved

CFU members in local hazard reduction burns, giving these members the opportunity to practise mopping-up activities such as extinguishing spot fires caused by ember attack.

The NSWFB is working continuously to improve the service we provide to our CFU volunteer members. Achievements during the year included the following.

- Developing a suite of policies and procedures to guide CFU members and NSWFB employees on a range of issues such as the development of new units, training and membership.
- Carrying out detailed risk assessments to identify high-risk areas which would benefit from having CFUs. Risk factors assessed included slope, aspect, road and vegetation type, and distance from bushland.
- Improving information sharing between the NSWFB and CFU members through a range of communication channels including quarterly email and SMS updates, regular updates to the online members' portal, and face-to-face team coordinator meetings where bushfire officers provide bushfire updates and program developments.
- Giving CFU members and NSWFB employees access to map products displaying key data including CFU areas of operations, potential risk areas, and local spatial information such as static water supplies and hydrant locations.
- Streamlining CFU training to provide members with comprehensive induction training followed by scenario-based skill reviews every two years.



## Bushfire hazard reduction

During the year NSWFB officers carried out hazard reduction clearing and burns on the bushland urban interface when weather conditions were suitable. Hazard reductions decrease bushfire fuel in the zones between homes and bushland, thus reducing the effects of uncontrolled bushfires on life, property and the environment.

In 2008/09, 62 hazard reduction burns were carried out. Full details are reported to the Rural Fire Service and published in their Annual Report, along with hazard reductions by all land managers and responsible agencies. Unfavourable weather conditions resulted in fewer burns being carried out than planned. The hazard reductions were conducted in cooperation with the RFS, National Parks and Wildlife Service, local councils, other public lands managers, CFUs and Landcare groups. They also gave residents the opportunity to consult with fire crews on how to best prepare homes to protect them from bushfire.

## Provide regulatory, advisory, inspection and investigation services

### Fire safety in buildings

Throughout the year, NSWFB fire safety officers provided technical advice on fire prevention and life safety in buildings to State Government agencies, local councils, industry and the public. Under Clause 144 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000*, our officers assessed 138 developments which involved 489 alternative solutions against certain performance requirements of the Building Code of Australia. Based on these assessments, advice was provided to certifying authorities about whether proposed building designs were appropriate in terms of public safety and the safety of fire officers. Final inspections were also carried out prior to occupancy at 195 developments involving alternative solutions.

## Other building inspections

Acting on complaints, NSWFB fire safety officers also carried out over 300 inspections during the year under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*. These complaints came from local councils and the public, as well as from frontline fire officers as part of their pre-incident planning activities. The most common problems found were locked or blocked exits; fire alarm and/or suppression systems which had not been properly maintained; and malfunctioning exit signs, emergency lighting and hydrant systems. Fire safety officers gave remediation advice and served rectification orders on building owners where necessary.

## Inspections of hazardous sites

During 2008/09, the NSWFB continued to undertake inspections of major hazardous sites such as oil refineries, and explosives and chemical factories. Each site was profiled in terms of hazards, potential risks and preventative actions required. We also combined with the NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water to conduct joint inspections of other hazardous materials facilities. Our role included advising on safe methods of storing hazardous materials and how to safeguard them from fires and other emergencies.

Under the *Occupational Health and Safety Regulation 2001* and the *Explosives Regulation 2005*, around 6000 hazardous sites across the State are required to create emergency plans. During the year, the NSWFB assessed the fire safety aspects of emergency plans which were submitted.





## Major infrastructure projects

During 2008/09, the NSWFB continued to assist other State and Federal Government agencies with major infrastructure projects. Our fire safety specialists helped in assessing, advising on and approving the fire detection and suppression systems for the Epping-to-Chatswood Rail Link, and ensuring that proposed incident management plans integrated with our *Standard Operational Guidelines*.

The NSWFB was also involved in the design, assessment and commissioning of fire safety elements of several major Federal Government projects. These projects included proposed and existing Department of Defence critical infrastructure sites located in NSW.

## Fire investigations

During 2008/09, the NSWFB's specialist fire investigators investigated 319 fires, explosions and fire deaths to try to determine the causes and origins of fires, identify unsafe practices and behaviours, and provide recommendations on rectification. This information was made available as required to building owners, insurance companies, the NSW Police Force, local councils and the NSW Coroner. On many occasions, the information gained through these investigations was used to improve fire and life safety in the built environment; to assess the impact of new technology and new building designs, materials and construction methods; and to better understand human behaviour in fires. During the year, our specialist fire investigators checked and completed 298 Police court statements and made 18 court appearances.

FIRES INVESTIGATED BY NSWFB SPECIALIST FIRE INVESTIGATORS					
	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Determined as accidental	120	90	80	98	118
Incendiary/deliberate	158	143	111	102	111
Undetermined	72	90	92	90	90
<b>Total</b>	<b>366</b>	<b>323</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>319</b>

## Accelerant detection dogs

The NSWFB is the only Australian fire service using accelerant detection dogs. Currently we have two dogs in service, Sheba and Winna, both Labradors with a very high sensitivity to flammable liquids. Working with their handlers, these dogs can quickly identify where accelerants have been used at fires, thus aiding in detecting and reducing arson. Their presence at fire scenes also acts as a visual deterrent to potential fire-setters. During the year, the dog handlers and their dogs attended 99 incidents across NSW, resulting in 10 court appearances, and delivered 42 lectures and demonstrations to both internal and external stakeholders.

The handlers have given presentations to major science organisations such as the Australian New Zealand Forensic Society. Our accelerant detection teams are currently involved in a research study with the University of

Technology Sydney to assess the dogs' effectiveness, study ways to improve their accuracy, and compare the training and work practices of agencies using detector dogs.

The NSWFB is represented on the Australian Service Dog Association, which includes all Government agencies using dogs in their work. In May 2009 Sheba and Winna competed in the National Service Dog Trials, coming second and third in the detection category.

## Research, identify and address major community risks

### Unsafe consumer products

When faulty consumer products such as electrical appliances are suspected of causing fires, responding fire crews advise the NSWFB's fire investigators and researchers who analyse the information. All products identified as being involved in a number of fire incidents are referred to the NSW Office of Fair Trading, other relevant Government agencies, and interstate fire investigation units for appropriate action. Products investigated during the year included halogen downlights, dishwashers and ceiling insulation, with fact sheets and media alerts issued where necessary.



## Bushfire research task force

Following the devastating bushfires in Victoria in February 2009, the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre set up a Task Force made up of representatives from research organisations and various state fire agencies, including the NSWFB. The Task Force analysed and assessed factors contributing to the Victorian fires, including fire behaviour; human behaviour and community safety issues; and building and planning issues. Their findings were shared across Australia and internationally, and provided valuable input into the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission and other inquiries.

## Reduced fire risk cigarettes

Cigarettes are a leading source of ignition in fatal fires. The NSW Government and the NSWFB have led the push nationally to introduce reduced fire risk cigarettes which self-extinguish after being dropped. The NSWFB represented Australian fire services on a national committee which produced Australian Standard AS 4830 covering these cigarettes. This standard was published in 2007.

The NSWFB, in conjunction with the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council and Emergency Management Australia, then worked with the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department to incorporate the new standard into legislation. In June 2008, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission released a Regulatory Impact Statement recommending that reduced fire risk cigarettes be regulated under the *Trade Practices Act 1974*.

On 18 September 2008 the *Trade Practices (Consumer Product Safety Standard) (Reduced Fire Risk Cigarettes) Regulations 2008* came into force. Originally all cigarettes manufactured or imported into Australia had until February 2011 to comply with this legislation. This timeframe has since been reduced and now all cigarettes sold in Australia must comply with this Regulation by September 2010.

This regulation is a major breakthrough for fire safety throughout Australia, making us one of the first countries in the world to introduce such legislation. Introducing reduced fire risk cigarettes over the next two years is expected to decrease fire deaths in Australia as tobacco companies change their products to meet these new requirements.

Assistant Commissioner Jim Smith received the 2008 Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council Laurie Lavelle 'Achiever of the Year' Award for his work in championing the introduction of reduced fire risk cigarettes as an effective fire prevention and safety measure. The Award recognises significant contributions to the knowledge, skills and operations of fire and emergency services in Australia and improving fire safety standards.

## Analysis of fire deaths

In June 2008, the NSWFB adopted a new approach to fire deaths and serious fire injuries in addition to the usual operational debriefs. A Fire Fatality Analysis Committee is now convened within one week of any fire death or serious fire injury occurring in a NSWFB Fire District. The Committee reviews and analyses the incident, with the aim of identifying contributing factors and recommending remedial action to prevent such tragedies recurring.

## Residential smoke alarms

Smoke alarms are lifesaving early-warning devices which have proved effective worldwide in detecting smoke and alerting building occupants to the presence of fire. Installed in the correct location, they can increase the time available for people to safely escape a burning building.

In cooperation with other agencies, business and community organisations, the NSWFB worked hard during 2008/09 to inform the public of the requirements of smoke alarm legislation, and to promote the effectiveness of smoke alarms in protecting life and property. Photoelectric alarms rather than the more common ionisation alarms are now recommended because they detect many home fires more quickly.

Our community education activities are ongoing, and include both major public information campaigns using mass media and promotions carried out by fire stations in their local communities. These activities have continued to raise community awareness of the importance not only of having smoke alarms in place, but also ensuring that they are working.

The NSWFB is also working with the Real Estate Institute of NSW to run information forums for its members on home fire safety, smoke alarm legislation and its impact on the *Residential Tenancies Act 1987*.

### SMOKE ALARM PENETRATION

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
% of homes with smoke alarms	71.5	76.9	86.9	92.9	93.6

Source: NSW Population Health Survey 2008 (HOIST), Centre for Epidemiology and Research, NSW Department of Health.





Section 4

# OPERATIONAL PREPAREDNESS

Capability Development

performance



## Priorities

- Recruit, train and develop our workforce to ensure high quality service and job satisfaction
- Improve the health, wellbeing and fitness of our people so that they can perform their jobs safely and efficiently
- Increase operational readiness through disaster planning, training exercises and learning from experience
- Maintain fleet and equipment to ensure reliability and effectiveness
- Manage assets and finances to achieve efficient use of resources
- Accurately analyse and assess emergency risks and allocate resources and services based on these risks
- Implement principles of ecologically sustainable development in all operations

## Highlights

- Secured renewal of our Registered Training Organisation registration for another five years
- Graduated 120 new full-time fire officers from the NSWFB State Training College
- Completed 31 development programs resulting in the promotion of 229 Senior Firefighters, 62 Station Officers and 30 Inspectors
- Developed and launched the *NSWFB Safety Strategy 2009–2012*
- Removed inappropriate colour vision restrictions for people applying to become fire officers
- Negotiated a new death and disability award; new arbitrated awards covering pay and conditions for full-time and retained fire officers also came into effect
- Continued joint purchasing arrangements with other NSW and interstate emergency services and agencies to reduce costs and achieve economies of scale
- Improved protection of the community by opening new fire stations at Lavington (Albury) and Raymond Terrace (Grahamstown) and completing major renovations at eleven other fire stations
- Introduced high visibility markings and low energy consumption emergency warning lights on new fire engines and response cars
- Established the Station Inventory Management System in all fire stations in January 2009, improving service, reliability and maintenance of equipment on fire engines
- Established a new five-year procurement contract for all items of uniform and personal protective equipment



## Future directions

- Develop a shared services strategy for support functions with other agencies in the Police and Emergency Services cluster
- Develop new training, policies and processes to guide and educate staff on appropriate workplace conduct
- Implement an overarching, integrated safety management system
- Implement an OHS risk management framework that supports all aspects of our operations
- Continue to establish a safety culture which embeds safety as a core value for all NSWFB employees
- Implement a work and development planning system for administrative, trades and senior operational staff to improve job satisfaction and performance
- Improve recruitment processes and techniques including a move to rolling recruitment for full-time fire officers
- Develop electronic procurement capability in line with the NSW Government's green procurement policy
- Continue to participate in joint purchasing initiatives with other emergency services to increase efficiency and reduce costs
- Maintain the average age of our operational fleet at less than ten years as new firefighting vehicles are commissioned
- Further improve the environmental performance of the NSWFB fleet
- Replace paper forms progressively with electronic workflow
- Implement an online credit card reconciliation program and the SAP travel management module

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Operational preparedness contributes directly to community confidence in our capability to respond to and contain emergencies and to protect the community and its infrastructure. Operational preparedness is essential to supporting high-quality effective emergency management.

## Key service measures

SERVICE MEASURES	UNITS	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Fire officers with current level 1 compartment fire behaviour training	%	100	100	100	100	100
Accredited rescue units	number	165	167	166	171	176
Average age of pumper fleet years	years	9.8	9.0	8.9	9.2	9.4

## Recruit, train and develop our workforce to ensure high quality service and job satisfaction

The NSWFB's workforce strategy is based on principles of good governance, strong effective leadership, ethical behaviour and a focus on health and safety.

### Recruitment

#### Full-time fire officers

Following a major recruitment campaign in mid-2008, 120 new full-time fire officers have been employed. Applications from the 2008 campaign are continuing to be processed for employment.

In addition, planning for a 2010 recruitment campaign has begun, incorporating a review of our recruitment process so that we can recruit a workforce best suited to the changing role of full-time fire officers.

Next year we aim to trial a rolling recruitment process, which would allow us to accept applications on a regular or ongoing basis. It would also help us in further increasing the participation of those groups currently under-represented in our workforce in the application and employment process (ie women and people from indigenous or culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds).

#### Retained fire officers

In 2008/09 we continued to face a shortfall in the number of retained staff. A recruitment officer was appointed in January 2009 to address retained recruitment and retention issues. Achievements so far include:

- development of a tracking tool to identify retained vacancies
- producing new marketing material, including a new information video, to attract new applicants
- establishing working groups to examine a range of issues including daytime availability and working hours
- developing recruitment plans and fact sheets to help station staff with the recruitment process
- developing retention strategies to be rolled out in 2009/10 to reward staff for their commitment and to give recognition to their primary employers.

### Training review

In 2007/08 an external consultant conducted a strategic review of aspects of learning and development within the NSWFB. The review recommended a number of changes and initiatives to enable the NSWFB to meet future training needs, including integration of all training and development into a single Directorate. We are continuing to implement the review's recommendations in our training programs. A fundamental review of future learning and development requirements and structures will take place in 2009/10.





## NUMBERS OF STAFF ATTENDING TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS<sup>1</sup>

Training and development program <sup>1</sup>	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Full-time Fire Officers Recruit Training	102	213	176	139	120
Appliance and Aerial Training	4384	3573	3385	3743	3147
Breathing Apparatus Training (includes personnel from external agencies)	8257	15 490	17 010	11 145	9805
Fire Suppression Training	1660	856	480	1644	1300
Senior Firefighters Promotional Program	175	177	59 <sup>2</sup>	100	229
Officers Development Program	10	10	0 <sup>6</sup>	0 <sup>6</sup>	0 <sup>6</sup>
Station Officers Promotional Program	80	81	77	61	62
Inspectors Promotional Program	22	34	28	0 <sup>4</sup>	30
Full-time Fire Officers Skills Maintenance	N/A	N/A	N/A	1629 <sup>5</sup>	1941
Full-time Fire Officers Level 1 to Qualified Firefighter Assessments	N/A	N/A	N/A	1433 <sup>5</sup>	1578
Retained Captain and Deputy Captain Development Program <sup>5</sup>	N/A	N/A	N/A	126 <sup>5</sup>	108
Retained Fire Officers Recruit Training	N/A	363	331	300	377
Retained Fire Officers Skills Maintenance	N/A	N/A	N/A	546 <sup>5</sup>	948
External Programs	114	237	16 <sup>3</sup>	8 <sup>3</sup>	10 <sup>3</sup>
Basic Life Support	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	158

### Notes:

1. This table does not include all training for re-accreditation purposes
2. Reduced numbers in 2006/07 were due to changes in pre-course requirements and staff availability
3. The NSWFB had previously run many Certificate 4 courses in Workplace Training and Assessment. Delivery of these courses was put on hold while aspects of this course were reviewed
4. This program was not offered in 2007/08 as numbers trained were sufficient to meet the NSWFB's needs at that time
5. Offered for the first time in 2007/08 as a formal training program
6. This program has been replaced by other development programs.



## Full-time recruit training

During the year, 120 full-time recruit fire officers graduated from our State Training College with a Certificate II in Public Safety (Firefighting and Emergency Operations). We also delivered operational competency training to two full-time fire officers who had been re-appointed to the service.

## Skills acquisition and skills maintenance training

During 2008/09, we delivered both skills acquisition and skills maintenance training to full-time and retained fire officers across the State. Training consisted of both theoretical and practical components. In addition, 75 senior fire officers received basic skills refresher training.

We delivered six Captains Development programs that focussed on incident control systems, incident management, administration and station management. Candidates also gained the qualification *Provide Training through Instruction and Demonstration of Work Skills* as part of the program.

Our Workplace Assessors conducted assessments on three Public Safety Training Package units and five agency-specific topics for fire officers on the Level 1 to Qualified Firefighter program. They also accredited fire officers on the operation of various fire engines and pumps.

## Fire suppression training

During 2008/09 the full-scale rollout of the Structural Firefighting Level 2 program continued with fire officers receiving theoretical and practical training in fire behaviour, tactical ventilation, case study investigation, and fireground strategies and tactics for fires inside buildings.

Training in tactical ventilation and positive pressure ventilation (PPV) was conducted prior to new PPV equipment being installed in various fire stations.

In 2009 we introduced a new 'T-cell' live fire prop which increased the effectiveness of our practical training. The prop is being used at all levels of training including senior officer assessment.

Personnel from the NSWFB, ACT Fire Brigade and the Royal Australian Navy were among the 24 people who completed the Structural Firefighting Instructor's course. We delivered fire science training to 20 NSW Police officers as part of fire investigation and forensic training courses, and delivered training in fire behaviour to 30 personnel from other agencies.

In April 2009, the NSWFB and Institution of Fire Engineers co-hosted the International Fire Instructors Workshop. This workshop attracted firefighting instructors and fire engineers from a range of countries including Canada, Croatia, Hong Kong, Spain, Sweden, the UK and the USA.

## Basic life support training

During 2008/09, we transferred our basic life support training (advanced first aid) from the WorkCover syllabus to nationally recognised competencies. This year 118 full-time fire officers and 40 retained fire officers were awarded new first aid qualifications. We also refreshed the skills of 696 permanent fire officers and 871 retained fire officers to enable them to renew their certification.

## Appliance training

During the year, NSWFB fire officers throughout the State successfully completed training and received 3147 qualifications/competencies on specialised vehicles including pumpers, off-road tankers and aerial ladder platforms. Our specialised Appliance Training Unit delivered 1375 of these qualifications internally.

We completed 308 Roads and Traffic Authority medium rigid licence upgrades and 53 heavy rigid licence upgrades during the year. We also continued running the WorkCover Elevated Work Platform program, issuing certificates to 45 NSWFB aerial appliance operators.



## Breathing apparatus and hazardous materials training

Training was conducted for full-time and retained fire officers, including training in breathing apparatus (BA) and hazardous materials (hazmat) response, as well as intermediate hazmat training for staff in regional areas. We continued training fire officers across the State in the use of Orion gas detectors in conjunction with an annual refresher program. We also started rolling out training on the new Dräger BA in regional NSW, thus improving the safety and comfort of our fire officers.

Other training carried out included use of thermal imaging cameras, the Hazmat Technicians course, senior officer basic skills, waterways training for intermediate hazmat stations, and further training in extended-duration air sets. Ongoing programs included operational and training support roles for specialised decontamination for special events and the intermediate hazmat enhancement program.

Personnel from other agencies such as NSW Police, Ambulance Service of NSW, RailCorp, NSW Health, Department of Defence and the NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water continued to benefit from hazmat awareness and BA training delivered as part of our role in cross-agency training.

## Staff exchanges and secondments

The NSWFB has continued to provide development opportunities for staff to gain experience in other organisations through a program of exchanges and secondments. In 2008/09 under our International and Interstate Firefighter Exchange Program:

- Senior Firefighter Wayne Brien exchanged places with Firefighter Alan Roberts of the North Vancouver Fire and Rescue Service, Canada
- Senior Firefighter Deryck Salfus exchanged places with Firefighter Stefan Hillstrom from Gastrike Fire and Rescue Service, Sweden
- Firefighter Ben Stevenson exchanged places with Firefighter Craig Herrmann of the South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service.

Inspector Gary White also started a two-year secondment as Chief of the Solomon Islands Fire Service, replacing Inspector Graham Webb in this position.

## Professional development through promotion programs

During 2008/09, we conducted 26 Senior Firefighters Development Programs with 229 Qualified Firefighters successfully completing the program and being promoted to the rank of Senior Firefighter. We also conducted three Station Officers Development Programs with 62 Leading Firefighters successfully completing the program and being promoted to the rank of Station Officer. In addition, 30 Station Officers participated and graduated from two Inspectors Promotional Programs. In 2008/09, Station Officers and Inspectors Promotional Programs were restructured and shortened to six weeks.

We commenced planning an Incident Management Officer Development Program for Senior Officers, and Incident Management Workshops for staff intending to sit entry tests for future Station Officers and Inspectors Promotional Programs.

Throughout the year, the NSWFB developed and maintained training and development partnerships with a range of organisations, enabling us to draw on a broad range of expertise to strengthen leadership and management skills. Partners included Charles Sturt University, Open Training and Education Network, Australian Institute of Police Management, Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council, Australian Emergency Management Institute, NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, Queensland Combined Emergency Services Academy, Institute of Public Administration Australia, Australia New Zealand Office of Government and Emergency Management NSW.

During the year, we continued running our 'Leadership through Mentoring' program to ensure ongoing development of our future leadership capabilities.

## Developing quality education

During 2008/09, major achievements in the work undertaken by the NSWFB to ensure the quality of our education and training programs included:

- designing and further developing the NSWFB's accredited and non-accredited face-to-face and distance learning programs
- achieving a successful NSW Vocational Education and Training Accreditation Board audit, resulting in renewal of our Registered Training Organisation registration for another five years
- ensuring compliance with Australian Quality Training Framework standards, and promoting and facilitating continuous improvement
- facilitating development of the Urban Search and Rescue Category 3 Taskforce Leader program in partnership with the New Zealand Fire Service.

## Library and information services

The NSWFB's library and information service specialises in resources on firefighting, fire prevention, fire safety engineering, community safety, fire service administration, hazardous materials and rescue. The library catalogue, comprising over 38 000 resources, is searchable via our Intranet, and a monthly library update is distributed to publicise new resources. The library also offers an electronic current awareness service to automatically notify staff of new resources in their areas of interest. The Library supports staff undertaking learning and development by providing study materials, research support and information skills training and advice.

Our library is a member of networks such as inFIRE (International Network for Fire Information and Reference Exchange) and ALIES (Australasian Libraries in the Emergency Sector). ALIES is a cooperative information network serving emergency management agencies.

In 2008/09, the library loaned 2098 items from its collection to NSWFB staff, supplied over 2000 journal articles and answered 3700 reference queries. Information was sourced from other libraries as necessary, and the effective use of specialist online services was promoted to staff.

## Improve the health, fitness and wellbeing of our people so that they can perform their jobs safely and efficiently

### Health and safety

The *NSWFB Safety Strategy 2009–2012* was developed with extensive consultation and was launched in June 2009. This strategy will maintain an organisational focus on safety, and provides both the roadmap and mechanism for improving our safety performance. Our overall goal is to embed a culture of safety at all levels of the organisation. The plan identifies actions and performance indicators to measure progress in achieving this goal.

During the year, we continued building a safety management system which will provide the foundation for ensuring greater control over, and effectiveness of, safety throughout the NSWFB. The system will be rolled out over a three-year period commencing 2009/10.

In 2008/9 we produced five Safety Bulletins and ten Operations Bulletins. These bulletins were issued to all fire officers and are an effective means of providing timely information about safety issues and new procedures.

We conducted around 250 OHS investigations where fire officers suffered injuries or experienced near misses which could have caused injury. These investigations produced valuable recommendations for improvements as well as helping us to analyse injury trends. Our OHS investigators were trained in incident cause analysis, enabling a consistent approach to investigations and reporting. Training in incident investigation and analysis was provided to 112 Inspectors this year, with all Superintendents to be trained in 2009/10.

Various working groups were established to provide guidance and assistance in managing key risks in our complex safety environment, including working at heights, radiation exposure and the swine flu pandemic.

Operational safety training remained a high priority with personnel at all levels gaining awareness of OHS issues through regular instruction and training. All recruit fire





officers were given comprehensive safety information based on detailed risk assessments of our operational environment. Tactical safety training focusing on the Safety Officer role was also delivered to the Station Officers Promotion Programs and to other operational staff through regional conferences and seminars.

## Injury prevention and health promotion

During the year we:

- presented health and fitness education sessions to fire officers on issues such as hydration, nutrition, exercise programming and safe effective use of exercise equipment
- trained 24 operational staff as physical aptitude assessors for retained fire officers
- delivered the posture program to operators undergoing training at the Sydney Communication Centre
- designed and implemented a pilot 'Waste the Waist' program, an interactive website designed to target cardiovascular risk factors including abdominal obesity
- released the hydration and nutrition policy along with supporting 'Keeping Fit To Fight Fire' educational posters
- implemented a touch football and jogging program, accompanied by instructional warmup posters, to help prevent injuries
- incorporated manual handling training sessions into the initial stages of recruit, breathing apparatus and driver training
- developed and trialed a standardised physical aptitude test for retained fire officers
- installed a new range of exercise equipment in fire stations and implemented an equipment maintenance program and equipment asset register
- further developed the FireFit intranet site to include comprehensive sections on daily workplace health initiatives, posture and manual handling
- provided personalised and group-based exercise and rehabilitation programs for over 200 staff
- conducted physical training for recruits and recruit instructors
- carried out voluntary staff health and fitness assessments
- continued our peer fitness leader program with 31 fire officers now qualified in Certificates 3 and 4 in Fitness
- continued health promotion programs such as Quit Smoking
- ran 22 flu vaccination clinics throughout the State with over 1000 employees vaccinated, an increase of over 50% on the previous year.

## Colour vision

During 2008/09, the NSWFB decided to remove colour vision restrictions for people applying to become fire officers. The decision was based on a detailed risk assessment and extensive consultation with fire officers. Dr John Parkes, a specialist in occupational and environmental medicine and an Australian authority on colour vision issues, was commissioned to research and make recommendations.

We will accommodate colour vision restrictions by using alternative methods for some activities, and by considering colour requirements when buying equipment. A few exceptions remain where external colour vision standards apply to specialist operational roles, for example, maritime and aviation accreditations.

The decision to remove colour vision restrictions places the NSWFB at the forefront of providing inclusive and supportive employment practices for all members of the community.

## Injury management

We continued to improve our injury management practices and service delivery to employees who sustained workplace injury or illness. During the year we:

- improved our incident notification system to our workers compensation insurer
- implemented a policy on alternative duties for injured retained fire officers
- also expanded the range of alternative duties for injured full-time fire officers including a trial of station-based duties
- conducted pilot programs with our insurer to improve the management of psychological injuries
- finalised our service level agreement with our insurer defining the services and performance levels they are required to deliver
- improved management of workers compensation sick leave
- improved internal reporting to line management regarding claims and return-to-work status
- developed an integrated claims management and return-to-work software system, to be implemented in 2009/10.

During the year we also significantly improved our performance against key indicators including:

- a 26.5% increase in the number of workplace injuries reported to our insurer within the legislated timeframe
- a 13% increase in the number of staff returning to work within two months of their injury, a 15% increase in those returning within three months, and an 11% increase in those returning within six months.

## Industrial relations

In September 2008, the Industrial Relations Commission of NSW arbitrated two new awards for full-time and retained fire officers which included wage increases to be paid over three years from June 2008 (the first increase was 4.6%, followed by two successive 4% increases). The arbitrated decision also included a range of substantial improvements in efficiencies and cost outcomes from work practices, and a recognition of a change in work value.

## Death and disability award

The *Crown Employees (NSW Fire Brigades Firefighting Staff Death and Disability) Award 2009* provides improved death and disability benefits for both full-time and retained fire officers who are injured or killed on or off-duty. Benefits are paid as pensions and lump sums, depending on the incapacity, and are funded through a combination of employer and firefighter contributions. The Award comprises three key elements: improved death and disability benefits; rehabilitation and retraining; and a health and fitness program.

The Award was renegotiated in March 2009 for another three years. Changes included a new definition for retained fire officer's primary employment, and increased lump sum payments for off-duty total and permanent incapacity. The Industrial Relations Commission gave the NSWFB and the Fire Brigades Employees' Union permission to negotiate amendments to the Award provisions for rehabilitation, retraining and lump sum payments for full-time fire officers who suffer partial and permanent incapacity.

NUMBER OF FIRE OFFICERS RECEIVING DEATH AND DISABILITY BENEFITS IN 2008/09	On-duty	Off-duty
<b>Partial and permanent incapacity</b>		
Full-time fire officers	5	0
Retained fire officers	2	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Total and permanent incapacity</b>		
Full-time fire officers	1	0
Retained fire officers	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Death</b>		
Full-time fire officers	0	1
Retained fire officers	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>

## Employee assistance program

The NSWFB provides access to confidential professional counselling services for all staff and their immediate families through a contracted Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider on a 24-hour basis for both work-related and personal issues. During 2008/09, 224 NSWFB staff and their family members used EAP services for a total of 473.5 hours which included face-to-face and telephone counselling, along with the email-assist program.

New employee assistance strategies implemented throughout the year included workshops facilitated by Beyond Blue in Wollongong and the Illawarra, dealing with common mental health issues in the workplace. We also developed new mental health fact sheets and resources that were made available to all employees via our intranet.

## Critical incident support program

The NSWFB uses a multi-faceted approach in dealing with the potential effects of traumatic incidents on fire officers. Our critical incident support program encompasses a range of services including one-to-one assistance, on-scene support and followup, education and information sessions encouraging early intervention and referral to professional support services. The program relies heavily on the voluntary services of fire officers who are trained in peer support.

CHAPLAINCY SERVICES PROVIDED	2007/08	2008/09
Visits to fire stations/offices	387	349
Visits to home/hospital	254	312
Counselling sessions (phone or face-to-face)	512	602
Phone calls (approximate)	1832	1950
On-scene support	33	28
Critical incident debriefs/defuses	11	8
Ceremonial events	28	18
Information/education sessions	27	23
Championships	5	5
Weddings	14	11
Funerals	13	14
Personal development and training (days)	23	10
Training with critical incident support peers (days)	N/A	8
Other assistance given	55	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>3210</b>	<b>3386</b>

During the year, we developed new information and education resources that were made available to all fire officers through our intranet. A conference was held with sessions from Beyond Blue, the University of NSW and a consultant psychologist to improve the knowledge, skills and abilities of members of our Peer Team. The recruitment, training, rigorous assessment and team-building of new Peer Supporters is an ongoing process to enhance our capability to support operational personnel dealing with distressing incidents.

## EEO management plan and disability action plan

The NSWFB is reviewing its EEO Management Plan and its Disability Action Plan. Revised versions of these plans are due to be released in late 2009. The removal of colour vision restrictions for people applying to become fire officers is one of several initiatives to accommodate people with a disability where appropriate in the NSWFB workforce.

## Chaplaincy

As an emergency service, we constantly respond to all types of incidents, which can sometimes be traumatic for both victims and responders, particularly where human tragedy is involved. During the year, our Salvation Army Chaplains, Majors Lyndsay Smith and Dawn Smith continued to provide counselling and support to fire officers and their families, as well as to members of the public involved in or affected by these emergency incidents. Their commitment is both immensely and greatly appreciated.

The Chaplains provide a continuum of care to our staff and their families, being available to help them during difficult times as well as at major life events such as weddings and funerals. As an accredited trainer with the Critical Incident Stress Management Foundation of Australia, Major Lyndsay Smith also provided in-house training for our Peer Support program.

## Increase operational readiness through disaster planning, training exercises and learning from experience

### Lessons Learned Centre

A Lessons Learned Centre was set up within the NSWFB in February 2008. The Centre is part of our commitment to continuous improvement, and is greatly assisting our staff in learning from experience and using evidence and knowledge to improve safety, working practices and effectiveness.

The Centre's role is to collect information from incidents and experiences from both within the NSWFB and around the world; coordinate analysis of this information; and then disseminate this within the NSWFB, ensuring that policies, procedures and training are updated to reflect the lessons learned. It also contributes to post incident analysis by facilitating operational debriefs for significant or unique incidents and events.

The Centre is responsible for developing, reviewing and disseminating formal operational information including Safety Bulletins, Operations Bulletins, Standard Operational Guidelines, In Orders and Standing Orders. In addition, it provides information through an intranet site, case studies, monthly Heads Up emails, multimedia products and fire station forums.

During 2008/09, the Centre processed over 100 debrief reports; produced 26 issues of In Orders, 6 case studies, 11 issues of Heads Up, 5 Safety Bulletins and 10 Operations Bulletins; presented to around 50 station forums and other internal groups; completed and released 7 Standard Operational Guidelines, 1 guideline support document and 11 checksheets; and undertook a number of research projects.





## Joint training exercises with other emergency services

The NSWFB regularly participates in a wide range of disaster planning and joint training exercises across the State with other emergency services and support agencies, transport operators, public utilities and industry. These exercises are crucial to constantly rehearse and improve our capability, identify any aspects which need improvement, increase cooperation and integration with other agencies, and carry out pre-incident planning. They ensure that the NSWFB is prepared for a wide range of possible emergencies, and they give our staff vital knowledge about unfamiliar operating environments and multi-agency protocols.

During 2008/09, we participated in a range of exercises including:

- transport emergency exercises (such as simulated plane emergency landings, motor vehicle accidents, and rail derailments)
- major infrastructure exercises carried out in conjunction with water and energy utilities and other agencies
- exercises on key commercial sites, including high-rise residential blocks, shopping centres and major industrial sites
- multi-agency counter-terrorism exercises
- hazardous materials exercises involving chemical, biological and radiological hazards
- general rescue and urban search and rescue exercises.

In 2008/09 the Firefighter Championships again attracted thousands of fire officers from Australian and New Zealand fire services. Teams of fire officers competed against each other in a range of events designed to hone their firefighting skills. The Championships showcased to the public the skills and expertise modern fire officers use every day, whether they are fighting fires or responding to major emergencies. NSWFB fire officers from Nowra were the winners at the State Championships held in Tamworth in October.

## Disaster planning

In November 2008 the NSW Government released the Wires Down Plan to improve responses to fallen powerlines and reduce their impact on emergency services. This Plan was developed after the NSWFB approached the State Emergency Management Committee and the energy sector. The Plan will enable emergency services and electricity retailers to work together on ways to better manage fallen powerline incidents.

NSWFB staff worked closely throughout the year with NSW Police, event coordination authorities and other State and Commonwealth agencies to ensure we were well prepared to deal with any incidents that might occur during various major events. We also prepared for our role in the World Masters Games, a major sporting event which will be held in Sydney in October 2009.



## Maintain fleet and equipment to ensure reliability and effectiveness

The Fleet Strategic Plan maps out future costs and replacement requirements over the lifecycle of our fleet (which is 20 years for aerial and 4WD fire engines, and 15 years for most other fire engines). This Plan ensures greater efficiencies in service delivery to metropolitan and regional communities in NSW by better resourcing of fire stations. The Plan's outcomes include:

- an integrated approach to fleet management which includes mid-life maintenance, ensuring fire engines remain operational over their life at minimal cost
- improved safety and ergonomics by managing how equipment is stowed on vehicles
- reduced environmental impact with the introduction of Euro 4 emission standard compliant engines
- gradual reduction in average age of the fleet as older fire engines are progressively replaced with modern firefighting vehicles.

During 2008, the Fleet Strategic Program successfully underwent a Gateway Review conducted by NSW Department of Commerce. Gateway Reviews are mandatory for major capital programs, and assist agencies in strengthening their procurement activities and improving outcomes. As recommended by the Review, we have changed the life cycle of our 4WD fire engine fleet from 15 to 20 years to bring it into line with other agencies.

At 30 June 2009, the NSWFB fleet totalled 1393 vehicles and plant items. This included 642 major vehicles, comprising 531 fire engines with pumps; an aerial fleet of 29 ladder platforms, ladders and aerial pumps; and 82 rescue and hazmat vehicles.

In addition to these, we have 510 miscellaneous vehicles including boats, trailers, prime movers, logistics support vehicles and Community Fire Unit Trailers. We also have 241 passenger and light commercial vehicles, comprising 174 response vehicles and 67 leased passenger vehicles.

The number of fire engines continued to decrease due to disposal of older vehicles which were previously kept for emergency operations, but were no longer economically viable to maintain. However, the commissioning of over 40 new fire engines in 2009/10 will increase fire engine numbers again. A number of replaced fire engines will remain in service as emergency fleet spares.

For more detailed information on the NSWFB's fleet, refer to Appendix: 22: Type and Distribution of Fire Appliances.

## Pumping appliances (fire engines)

### Class 1 Four wheel drive tankers

These multi-purpose four wheel drive fire engines have Class A foam systems and pump and roll firefighting capabilities; newer models also incorporate cabin protection systems and carry more water than a standard fire engine. In 2007/08 Mills Tui was awarded the contract to build 18 new Class 1 tankers, with commissioning of new vehicles due to start in September 2009. The average age of the operational Class 1 fleet, including service exchange vehicles (SEVs), is 11.1 years.

### Class 2 Pumpers

Manufactured by SEM Fire and Rescue, these pumpers include hazmat and primary rescue capability and have proved very effective in regional locations. There are currently 219 Class 2s in service, which includes six units in training locations and three SEVs.

Funding was allocated for 11 pumpers in 2008/09, as part of a three-year program to fund 28 new Class 2 pumpers from 2007/08 to 2009/10. The new vehicles are due to be commissioned from August 2009 onwards, and will replace existing Class 2 pumpers which will become SEVs. The average age of the operational Isuzu Class 2 fleet is 5.74 years.

### Class 3 Pumpers

Class 3 pumpers are urban fire engines which may be configured as primary rescue and hazmat vehicles. SEM Fire and Rescue are supplying new Class 3 fire engines on a Scania cab/chassis fitted with a Rosenbauer 4000 litre/minute pump.

Fifty eight new Class 3 pumpers are being funded over five years from 2005/06 to 2009/10. SEM Fire and Rescue delivered 19 new fire engines in 2008/09, with delivery of another 24 units due from July 2009 onwards. The average age of the operational Class 3 fleet is 10.37 years.

## Aerial appliances

Since 2000, 20 new aerial appliances have been commissioned: ten 15-metre aerial pumps, two 30-metre turntable ladders, four 37-metre ladder platforms and four 27 metre ladder platforms. Funding was provided in 2007/08 and 2008/09 to replace three aerial pumps. The contract to build these was awarded to Alexander Perrie & Co. The new aerals will be built on Scania chassis with a Telesqurt aerial unit and Waterous pump. They will be commissioned from August 2010 onwards, and will replace 2001 models which will become SEVs. Funding has also been provided in 2009/10 for purchase of a 44-metre ladder platform.

The average age of the aerial fleet, including SEVs, is 9.31 years.

## Specialised appliances

### Heavy hazmat vehicles

Six heavy hazmat vehicles built by Varley Specialised Vehicles were commissioned in 2007/08. These vehicles replaced older SEVs which were disposed of or deployed to other roles. The average age of the hazmat fleet is 5.7 years.

### Heavy rescue vehicles

The contract to build four new heavy rescue vehicles was awarded to Mills Tui. The project was initiated after the Euro 4 emission standard became available for cabs/chassis. One new rescue vehicle has been commissioned at Regentville with the remaining three vehicles to be commissioned by October 2009.

## Maintenance, inspections and refurbishments

In 2008/09, the NSWFB used its Greenacre workshop, two mobile lube service trucks, five on-call mobile service units and contractors' facilities across NSW to service and maintain its fleet. Our fleet staff carried out 240 major services and 215 minor services in Sydney and 440 services in regional areas. In addition, over 150 services were conducted on minor fleet vehicles in the workshops. The mobile on-call service vehicles attended 3456 service calls.

During the year, 88 aerial appliance inspections were conducted by NSWFB staff and 51 inspections by contractors. Our RTA-certified Heavy Vehicle Inspectors carried out pink slip inspections of the fleet. Major aerial inspection was completed on two ladder platforms.

The tanker mid-life program continued with 35 refurbishments completed since 2004/05. Cabin protection system modifications have been completed on all 33 Mills Tui vehicles.

As part of our program of fleet management and planned maintenance, all fire engines receive major servicing and inspections at mid-life. Since 2005/06, 67 Class 2 vehicles have been returned to SEM Fire and Rescue for scheduled mid-life work. In 2008/09, there were 10 Class 3 mid-life refurbishments completed with another 20 programmed in 2009/10.

Stowage was modified on some Class 3 appliances to enable them to operate as primary rescue units. Older cascaded Class 3 appliances have been modified as SEVs for Primary Rescue.

## Manage assets and finances to achieve efficient use of resources

### Procurement initiatives

This year, we continued participating with other Australian fire and emergency services in a national program of collaborative purchasing coordinated through the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC). The scope of this joint purchasing covers recurrent and capital contracts for plant and equipment as well as firefighting and emergency vehicles. The aim of this program is to reduce procurement overheads, achieve economies of scale and improve cooperation between agencies.

In conjunction with the NSW Department of Commerce, we renewed our apparel management contract for uniforms and protective clothing after a comprehensive tender process. The new contract continues the one-stop concept for purchase and supply of personal protective clothing and uniforms. It is also available to AFAC members and other NSW Government agencies.

During the year, we also awarded contracts to supply:

- structural firefighting boots, improved structural firefighting helmets and gloves
- a new winter jacket to all permanent employees
- fresh and long life catering to sustain fire officers while attending incidents
- Community Fire Unit trailers to support the expanding Community Fire Unit program.

In line with the NSW Government's Waste Reduction and Recycled Purchasing Policy, during 2008/09 we continued implementing green procurement in areas such as energy-efficient products, emission-efficient and emission-reducing vehicles, recyclable products and waste reduction.





## Property management

The NSWFB's real estate portfolio includes 339 fire stations and over 100 other properties including the Alexandria training college, four communication centres, area and zone offices, staff accommodation and two logistics support facilities at Greenacre. In 2008/09, we leased over 5000m<sup>2</sup> of commercial office accommodation including 3414m<sup>2</sup> in the Sydney CBD. We also leased accommodation for regional training centres, and for area and zone offices in Batemans Bay, Bathurst, Coffs Harbour, Goulburn, Leeton, Port Macquarie, Queanbeyan, Tamworth, Wagga Wagga and Wyong.

During the year, we bought land valued at \$950 000. A property exchange was completed at Port Macquarie securing land in the town's Emergency Services Precinct. We also sold real estate assets which no longer met our service delivery requirements for a total of \$1.57 million (see Appendix 26: Disposal of surplus property).

## New fire stations and renovations

Projects completed in 2008/09 included:

- a new fire station at Lavington (Albury) at a cost of \$1.375 million and Raymond Terrace (Grahamstown) at a cost of \$2 million
- major renovations at Bellingen, Blackheath, Brunswick Heads, Crookwell, Darlinghurst, Forster, Lidcombe, Moama, Narellan, Silverwater and Yamba fire stations
- fitouts of a rescue training centre at Ingleburn and a station facility at Dunheved.

Major renovations started during the year at Kandos fire station. Major renovations are at tender stage for Coffs Harbour, Miranda and Wallerawang fire stations.

A new fire station at Sawtell is due for completion in July 2009. Development approvals were obtained for new fire stations at Baulkham Hills and West Wallsend (Holmesville), which are planned for construction during 2009/10. Lengthy negotiations for a proposed new fire station site at Kincumber continue with the various agencies involved in giving approval.

Development of a design concept is underway for a proposed new fire station at Broadmeadow. As a major centre for the Newcastle area, the proposed complex will include a new regional hazmat facility as part of the new fire station.

## Facilities management

During the year we spent \$1.4 million on planned routine repairs, major periodic repairs and renovations to real estate. Major cost items included works done to properties at Darlinghurst, Drummoyne, Gladesville, Kandos, Lockhart, Wollongong and Young. Other minor works throughout metropolitan and regional NSW were also completed.

Condition reports for all NSWFB buildings in the greater Sydney area were previously completed in 2007/08. Condition reports for all other assets will be completed by mid 2009/10. These reports provide comprehensive information about the condition of buildings and the costs of undertaking remedial works.

Approximately \$5.54 million was spent during the year on property issues relating to occupational health and safety, urgent minor and unscheduled works, cleaning, security, pest control and preventative maintenance of essential plant and equipment. Security and safety issues are increasingly important in facilities management to ensure security of critical infrastructure and compliance with regulatory safety requirements. The installation and monitoring of environmentally efficient systems and equipment is also becoming higher priority.

## Equipment management

The Station Inventory Management System (SIMS) was introduced into operational service in January 2009 enabling a systematic approach to inspecting and testing fire engines and their equipment. Designed by fire officers, SIMS saves time and energy when checking the large amounts of equipment carried on a fire engine.

SIMS uses seals to mark equipment items as operationally ready and records the dates that equipment was last checked. This system ensures all equipment and vehicles are routinely inspected, allowing station commanders and fire officers to easily track items. SIMS seals decrease the time spent checking equipment, avoids duplication and ensures the readiness of equipment.



## Manage assets and finances to ensure efficient use of resources

### Governing legislation and reporting requirements

The NSWFB, as an inner budget sector Department, complies with the following Acts, Regulations and Directions in presenting the financial segments within this Annual Report:

- Financial Reporting Code for Budget Dependent Agencies
- *Public Finance and Audit Act 1983* and Regulations
- *Annual Reports (Departments) Act 1985* and Regulations
- Treasurer's Directions
- Department of Premier and Cabinet Circulars and Memorandums
- Australian Accounting Standards
- International Financial Reporting Standards
- Statements of Accounting Concepts
- Urgent Issues Group Consensus View
- *Fire Brigades Act 1989*.

## Business risk insurance

The NSWFB is required to be a member of the NSW Treasury Managed Fund which provides all the insurance requirements of inner budget sector agencies of the State.

In 2008/09, the NSWFB was required to pay hindsight adjustment premiums of \$7.8 million (excluding GST) for workers compensation cover for 2004/05. This was in addition to the premium payable for the 2008/09 year for workers compensation.

During the year, the NSWFB received a refund of \$0.3 million as a final adjustment for 2002/03 workers compensation performance. We also received a refund of \$0.2 million for motor vehicles for 2006/07.

TOTAL DEPOSIT PREMIUMS (EXCLUDING GST) PAID TO THE NSW TREASURY MANAGED FUND	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Workers compensation	12 513	13 019	12 456	17 526	20 257
Motor vehicles	832	903	915	933	1 244
Public liability	235	232	313	388	380
Property	313	307	259	347	469
Other	16	16	12	12	10
<b>Total (excludes GST)</b>	<b>13 909</b>	<b>14 477</b>	<b>13 955</b>	<b>19 206</b>	<b>22 360</b>



## Key comparative figures

The NSWFB's operations are funded by Government contributions supplemented by operating revenue generated from user charges. The Government's contribution is the basis for calculating the Fire District Estimates. All contributors contributed to the NSWFB's capital funding in the same proportion that they contributed to recurrent funding.

The Fire District Estimates are the means by which the State recovers 86% of the cost of the NSWFB through statutory contributions from the insurance industry (73.7%) and local government (12.3%). The Government contributes the remainder (14%) through NSW Treasury. The NSWFB acted as the Government's agent in determining, invoicing and collecting the statutory contributions payable to the Crown by Local Government and the insurance industry, in accordance with the provisions of the *Fire Brigades Act 1989*.

The NSW Parliament Public Accounts Committee conducted a review of fire services funding during 2003/04. In September 2004 this Committee released its report, finding in favour of retaining the current fire services funding system.

The NSWFB's major physical assets are its fire stations and fleet, together with communications, computer and other incident-suppression and firefighting equipment. The value of each asset category is disclosed in Note 13 and Note 14 to the audited Financial Statements. The cost method of accounting is used for the initial recording of all acquisitions of assets controlled by the NSWFB. Plant and equipment costing \$3000 and above are individually capitalised.

Following the revaluation of land and buildings in 2008/09 and fire appliances in 2008/09 in accordance with NSW Treasury policy and Australian Accounting Standards, the financial position as at 30 June 2009 reflects the value of fire stations and fire appliances on a fair value basis. The resultant asset revaluation reserve increase of \$37.6 million is included in the total asset value of the NSWFB.

KEY COMPARATIVE FIGURES	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	Budget* 2008/09	Budget* 2009/10
	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m
<b>Operations</b>							
Operating expenses	451.4	485.4	500.6	530.0	563.8	532.4	545.5
Revenue – operating	30.6	31.2	35.8	42.4	74.8	24.3	24.3
Revenue – contributions							454.0
Total gains/(losses)	0.3	(0.7)	0.7	0.3	0.7	(0.1)	(0.1)
<b>Net cost of services</b>	<b>420.5</b>	<b>454.9</b>	<b>464.1</b>	<b>487.3</b>	<b>488.2</b>	<b>508.2</b>	<b>67.3</b>
Government contribution – recurrent	424.9	450.4	467.7	483.9	510.7	508.6	71.2
Operating surplus/(deficit)	4.4	(4.5)	(3.6)	(3.4)	22.4	0.4	3.9
Capital expenditures	36.0	41.8	43.4	32.1	54.8	45.9	44.1
Government contribution – capital	17.4	7.6	18.8	9.0	14.7	12.3	6.4
<b>Financial Position</b>							
Current assets	85.7	97.2	105.0	119.1	148.7	104.3	113.9
Non-current assets	411.8	419.1	433.9	435.6	497.2	456.0	460.4
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>497.5</b>	<b>516.3</b>	<b>538.9</b>	<b>554.7</b>	<b>645.9</b>	<b>560.3</b>	<b>574.3</b>
Current liabilities	65.0	74.8	72.6	79.2	89.1	71.1	81.2
Non current liabilities	15.3	22.9	16.5	19.6	22.2	17.7	18.7
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>80.3</b>	<b>97.7</b>	<b>89.1</b>	<b>98.8</b>	<b>111.3</b>	<b>88.8</b>	<b>99.9</b>
Net assets/total equity	417.2	418.6	449.8	455.9	534.6	471.5	474.4

\* As per the NSW State Budget papers



## 2008/09 Financial outcomes

In 2008/09, the NSWFB reported an operating surplus of \$22.4 million compared to last financial year's revised operating deficit of \$3.4 million. These figures do not include the capital appropriations as reported in the Operating Statement for the year ended 30 June 2009.

The 2008/09 operating surplus of \$22.4 million exceeded budget forecasts by \$22.1 million. This was largely attributable to the inclusion of 2009/10 Fire Service Levy contributions that were received from local government council and insurance Company contributors in advance of the contribution period.

The total expenditure rose by \$33.8 million (6.4%) to \$563.8 million from last financial year's actual of \$529.9 million. This was largely due to:

- an increase in employee related expenses of \$36.2 million; and
- a decrease in other operating expenses of \$3.7 million.

The total operating revenue increased by \$32.4 million (76.4%) to \$74.8 million from the previous year's actual of \$42.4 million.

### Capital works

The capital works program carried out during the year was \$52.277 million, which is \$3.95 million above the initial authorised limit of \$48.326 million. The amount of \$3.95 million was paid from the Brigades' capital reserve due mainly to the purchase of the Liverpool (Moorebank) Fire Station site from the Department of Defence (\$1 million) and additional expenditure on Type 2 fire appliances from the allocation provided by Treasury in 2007/08, following delays caused by late delivery of the new Euro 4 compliant Isuzu cab chassis.

Significant capital works outlays incurred during the year were:

- fleet replacement program (aerial, pumper and special appliances) \$20.898 million
- building works (properties) \$11.695 million, and
- general plant and equipment (which includes IT and communications, counter-terrorism equipment, Community Fire Units and other plant and equipment) \$17.76 million.

## 2009/10 Budget

The following comments relate to the budget estimates and Parliamentary Appropriation contained in the State Budget Papers for 2009/10.

## Operations for the year

Total expenses have been budgeted at \$545.479 million, an increase of 2.5% from the 2008/09 budget. This increased funding is for escalation adjustments for operating expenses.

Total revenues have been budgeted at \$478.3 million. This includes \$24.3 million for operating revenues and \$454.0 million from emergency services contributions. These contributions will be recorded as part of operating revenues. This is due to the new funding arrangements implemented from 1 July 2009 for the NSWFB, Rural Fire Service and the State Emergency Service. Under the new arrangements as legislated by the *State Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment (Budget Measures) Act 2008 No 122*, funding contributions from insurance companies (73.7%) and local councils (11.7%) will be received and retained by the NSWFB.

### Capital works program

As per NSW State Budget Papers 2009/10, Treasury's approved authorised limit for the capital works program of \$44.1 million in 2009/10 is being funded by the Government allocation of \$6.4 million, contributors' allocation of \$37.6 million, and the NSWFB cash balance of \$0.1 million.

## Fire district estimates

At the end of June 2009, there were 180 NSWFB Fire Districts. During 2008/09, variations (extensions and reductions) were gazetted to nine Fire Districts: Coolamon, Cootamundra, Goulburn, Sydney (Blacktown, Hornsby, Ku-ring-gai and Baulkham Hills), Young, Gosford, Yenda, Helensburgh and Illawarra.

Fire District Estimates are based directly on the NSWFB's operating budget for the financial year. In 2009/10, with the exception of the Sydney, Lower Hunter and Newcastle Fire Districts, the local council in each Fire District will contribute 11.7% of the estimated expenditure of the NSWFB in that area. The level of contributions sought from councils increases from time to time, reflecting an overall increase in the NSWFB's budget. In addition, the increases paid by individual councils can vary markedly from the average increase due to dissimilar incident and activity levels, staffing requirements and specific building repairs and maintenance programs.

The Sydney Fire District consists of 37 Councils and is one of three Fire Districts (Sydney, Lower Hunter and Newcastle) whose contributions are apportioned between councils based on the aggregated five-year moving average land values provided by the Valuer-General.

The insurance industry and property owners' contribution to the overall Fire District Estimates is based upon weighted insurance premiums as returned on a financial year basis. Advance contributions are based on the latest available returns.

## Accurately analyse and assess emergency risks and allocate resources and services based on these risks

The NSWFB carries out its role of protecting life, property and the environment through an integrated service delivery strategy which determines the appropriate allocation of infrastructure, vehicles, personnel and prevention programs to address identified risks.

The NSWFB's Service Delivery Strategy 2009–2020 was released in May 2009. The purpose of the Strategy is to guide the mid to long term development and delivery of NSWFB services in order to:

- implement Government policy objectives for emergency services in NSW
- ensure our services meet the requirements of the legislation under which we operate
- meet the changing needs of the NSW community.

Our Service Delivery Strategy will guide us in achieving agreement with our stakeholders on what services will be provided and how these will occur. It provides a reference framework that will enable us to plan resources to deliver the services required, in line with our corporate objectives.

This Service Delivery Strategy will drive the development of a revised Fire Service Resource Allocation Model which will:

- be based on response to all types of incidents and the delivery of community safety programs, not just on response to structure fires
- be based on risk rather than hazard
- identify a variety of treatment options incorporating all the elements of the five Rs (ie risk assessment, risk reduction, readiness, response, recovery)
- provide alternatives for maintaining an effective surge capacity so that existing resources are used more efficiently
- explore differing levels of readiness to respond that are based on risk
- explore new crewing configurations to provide greater flexibility in service delivery.

## Implement principles of ecologically sustainable development in all operations

The NSWFB's purpose is to minimise the impact of hazards and emergencies not only on the people and economy of NSW, but also on its environment. The *Fire Brigades Act 1989* was amended in 1998 to recognise the need to operate under the principles of ecologically sustainable development. This ensures that environmental considerations are integrated into all NSWFB activities and decision-making, both at incidents and in day-to-day business.

The NSWFB is seeking to continually improve its environmental performance. Our aim is to manage the activities over which we have control, and which impact upon the environment, in accordance with the principles of ecological sustainability. We are actively working to incorporate environmental best practice into our operational and business services. During the year, our Environment Committee met bimonthly to monitor environmental issues and trends, provide policy advice, and oversee environmental plans and programs within the NSWFB.

### Reducing emissions and saving energy

Climate change caused by humans is increasingly recognised as one of the most serious environmental threats facing the world today. The NSWFB is committed to helping combat climate change because we are in the frontline of dealing with natural disasters caused by a warming climate. In 2008/09 we implemented a number of initiatives to help reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

On 28 March 2009, we again participated in Earth Hour by turning off computer monitors and non-essential lighting for the designated 60 minutes at major NSWFB sites and many fire stations. Electricity consumption contributes heavily to greenhouse gas emissions, with cooling systems, ventilation and lighting the three biggest uses of electricity in office and public buildings.

In 2007 the NSWFB signed up to the 3CBD program, now known as CitySwitch. This program aims to improve the energy efficiency of office building tenants, thus reducing the carbon dioxide emissions which contribute to global warming. In 2008 an energy audit of our Sydney CBD head office achieved a four star rating in the National Australian Building Energy Rating System.

The NSWFB has also continued to purchase Green Energy, with 6% of all energy we used during the year coming from Green Energy sources.

Under the NSWFB's Fleet Strategic Plan, all new fire engines purchased by the NSWFB now have Euro 4 emission standard compliant engines, thus reducing the fleet's impact on the environment. Euro 4 is the latest emission standard specifying acceptable limits for exhaust emissions of new vehicles sold in European Union member states.

During the year, the NSWFB continued using Greenfleet to offset greenhouse emissions. Greenfleet is a non-profit organisation which reduces the environmental impact of transport by planting native trees to offset carbon dioxide emissions. Over 2008/09, the NSWFB's GreenFleet score, which measures fleet environmental performance, continued to improve.

## Saving water

The current severe drought and other effects of climate change are reducing the supply of water available for firefighting and other emergencies. To address this issue, the NSWFB has implemented a range of measures to save and minimise its use of water.

All new NSWFB fire stations have rainwater tanks, reduced-flow shower heads and aerating taps installed, reducing the amount of potable water used at stations. Retrofitting of rainwater tanks to existing stations also continued throughout 2008/9, with priority determined by rainfall patterns, local water restrictions and station requirements.

Since 2003, the NSWFB has run a compartment fire behaviour training program. Firefighting crews trained in using these techniques extinguish building fires with much less water than has been the case in the past.

The NSWFB only buys firefighting nozzles which use aerating technology. Their fine droplet size in fog mode reduces water usage, particularly when combined with compartment fire behaviour techniques.

The NSWFB Firefighter Championships are held four times per year at venues across the State. Previously these events each used about 50 000 litres of water. Recent reviews and changes to procedures and technologies have roughly halved water use, with further reductions achieved at sites with recycled water facilities.

## Reducing waste and recycling

To support the NSW Government's program of waste reforms as set out in the *Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery Act 2001*, the NSWFB continued implementing its Waste Reduction and Recycled Purchasing Policy during the year. For example, we bought 12.5% less paper than in the previous year, and our use of recycled paper increased 80%. For more information, see Appendix 13: Waste Reduction and Purchasing Policy.

We have also adopted a green procurement strategy to minimise the organisation's overall environmental impact. Green procurement has been applied to various areas including energy-efficient products, emission-efficient vehicles, recyclable products and waste reduction. Contractors to the NSWFB are required to implement environmentally responsible practices.

On 2 March 2009, the NSWFB again took part in Clean Up Australia Day, one of Australia's largest environmental awareness events. Fire crews across the State were joined by off-duty staff in retrieving tonnes of rubbish from waterways, parklands and beaches. Many took part in general cleanups in their neighbourhoods while other fire officers used specialist resources such as rescue equipment to remove rubbish from hard-to-reach areas.





Section 4

**EMERGENCY  
MANAGEMENT**

Response and Recovery

performance





## Objectives

TO ENSURE RAPID EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE  
MANAGEMENT OF EMERGENCY INCIDENTS  
AND DISASTERS

TO ASSIST THE COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS TO  
RECOVER AFTER EMERGENCIES

## Priorities

- Minimise the impact of emergency incidents through rapid effective response
- Develop and maintain strategic working partnerships with other emergency and support services
- Assist the community and business after emergencies and disasters
- Use information and communications technology effectively to support response and recovery
- Develop electronic tools and systems to improve organisational business processes

## Highlights

- Answered 96% of fire emergency calls within 10 seconds, well above the national benchmark of 90%
- Responded to 137 721 emergency incidents, including 31 873 fires and explosions, 12 864 non-fire rescues and related incidents including road accidents and medical assists, and 11 714 hazardous materials incidents and other hazardous conditions including powerlines down, electrical short-circuits and fuel spills
- Handled 254 698 incidents in our computer-aided dispatch system FireCAD (including calls taken for other agencies, duplicates and non-genuine calls)
- Rescued 3846 people at emergency incidents
- Developed a new rescue and disaster training centre at Ingleburn
- Implemented a new electronic data system for transferring emergency incident information between agencies, ICEMS, in our Communication Centres, making us the first Australian agency to adopt this system
- Successfully took on the primary rescue response role in a further eight areas in Sydney, the Central Coast, Newcastle and Wollongong after the Ambulance Service of NSW withdrew from these locations
- Sent fire crews to NSW's North Coast in March and May 2009 to assist local crews, SES and other agencies with flood and storm response operations
- Sent fire officers to assist in firefighting efforts in California, USA in July 2008 and in Victoria in February 2009
- Rolled out SAM, our new electronic rostering and timesheet system, making us the first Australian fire service to manage these processes electronically



## Future directions

- Implement a major upgrade and integration of our computer-aided dispatch system, FireCAD, and associated telephony and digital recording systems to further improve our response capability
- Continue to implement a shared services strategy in IT infrastructure with NSW Police Force and other emergency services
- Plan for the upgrade of the Government Radio Network from analog to digital, which will affect NSWFB radio transceivers and communication centre equipment
- Enhance our communication capability at major emergencies through continued development of incident command vehicles, kits for deployment to emergency operations centres and radio repeater units
- Develop video streaming capability from the Fire Air 1 helicopter to our Major Incident Coordination Centre and Communication Centres
- Establish partnerships with Australian and overseas emergency services and support agencies to promote better information-sharing and cooperation in emergency management
- Further develop our structural collapse rescue capability and, in conjunction with other agencies, increase our capability to respond effectively to the consequences of terrorist attacks and major natural disasters





## Key service measures

EMERGENCY RESPONSES	UNITS	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Fires and explosions	number	33 244	35 827	33 140	31 604	31 873
Non-fire rescues	number	2 908	2 980	3 336	3 272	4 171
Hazardous materials incidents and other hazardous conditions	number	11 803	11 771	12 731	11 434	11 714
Storms, floods, other natural disasters, and calls for assistance from other agencies	number	5 757	5 877	7 009	6 668	7 120

## Minimise the impact of emergency incidents through rapid effective response

### Total incidents

During 2008/09, NSWFB fire crews responded to 137 721 emergency incidents, an increase of 2.1% on 2007/08. This was an average of almost 380 incidents per day, or one incident every four minutes. Of these, 31 873 calls (23.1%) were fires and explosions, an increase of 0.9% on 2007/08; 11 714 calls (8.5%) were hazardous materials incidents and other hazardous conditions, an increase of 2.4% on 2007/08; and 12 864 calls (9.3%) were non-fire rescue calls and related incidents including road accidents and medical assists, an increase of 8.2% on 2007/08.

Automatic fire alarm systems generated a large number of false alarms; however, each must be treated as a genuine emergency until proven otherwise as these systems are generally installed in high-risk premises.



NUMBER AND TYPE OF INCIDENTS AND EMERGENCIES ATTENDED	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
<b>Fires and explosions</b>					
Structure fires	7 617	8 072	7 717	7 720	7 411
Outside storage fires	359	346	359	323	291
Vehicle fires	5 181	5 112	4 933	4 473	4 368
Bush and grass fires	10 972	12 866	10 912	9 114	9 878
Rubbish fires	8 876	9 195	8 978	9 543	9 617
Other fires	239	236	241	431	308
<b>Total fires and explosions</b>	<b>33 244</b>	<b>35 827</b>	<b>33 140</b>	<b>31 604</b>	<b>31 873</b>
<b>Other emergencies and incidents</b>					
Non-fire rescues and related incidents including road accidents and medical assists	8 631	9 676	11 522	11 893	12 864
Hazardous materials incidents and other hazardous conditions including powerlines down, electrical shortcircuits and fuel spills	11 803	11 771	12 731	11 434	11 714
Storms, floods, other natural disasters and calls for assistance from other agencies	5 747	5 877	7 009	6 668	7 120
Good intent calls	9 212	10 373	10 677	10 544	10 642
Malicious false calls	5 091	4 764	4 802	4 088	3 536
System-initiated false alarms	51 737	52 198	53 453	54 205	53 782
Other	4 263	4 192	4 673	4 447	6 190
<b>Total other emergencies and incidents</b>	<b>96 484</b>	<b>98 851</b>	<b>104 867</b>	<b>103 279</b>	<b>105 848</b>
<b>Total fires, explosions and other emergencies</b>	<b>129 728</b>	<b>134 678</b>	<b>138 007</b>	<b>134 883</b>	<b>137 721</b>

**Notes:**

- Figures may vary slightly from earlier publications to reflect the additional submission of incident reports and changes to data from data quality improvement initiatives.
- For February 2008, incident types reflect information provided on incident logs from NSWFB Communication Centres.



The NSWFB manages fire emergencies in NSW's major cities and towns; responds to rescues, hazardous materials incidents and possible terrorist attacks; and works with other government agencies to minimise the impact of bushfires, storms, floods, landslides, building collapses, motor vehicle accidents and other emergencies.

## Rescue

The provision of rescue services in NSW is coordinated by the State Rescue Board (SRB) under the *State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989*. The NSWFB has primary and secondary specialist rescue units in 176 locations throughout NSW, and 2242 of our fire officers are specially qualified and registered as rescue operators with the SRB. This makes us the largest rescue provider in the State. In addition to specialist rescue vehicles, every fire engine carries rescue equipment and every fire officer is trained in rescue.

During 2008/09, the NSWFB responded to 12 864 rescue calls and related incidents throughout the State, ranging from rescuing people caught in transport, domestic and industrial incidents through to animal rescues. In addition, specially-trained teams carried out swift water, alpine and vertical rescues. In performing these rescues, we worked closely with other agencies including the NSW Police Force, Ambulance Service of NSW, State Emergency Service and the NSW Volunteer Rescue Association.

A 2008 report by the Department of Premier and Cabinet into the Ambulance Service of NSW recommended transfer of Ambulance rescue services to the NSWFB to eliminate duplication of resources and free up paramedics for frontline patient treatment and transport. In September 2008, the SRB approved the NSWFB assuming the primary rescue response role in eight areas in Sydney, the Central Coast, Newcastle and Wollongong following withdrawal of Ambulance rescue units. The SRB also accredited additional NSWFB primary rescue stations to carry out this role. There was a seamless transition of rescue responsibilities, using existing NSWFB personnel, vehicles and rescue equipment.

During 2008/09, the NSWFB continued sharing its rescue expertise through training delivered to other emergency service organisations. For example, we delivered training in scene safety and road crash rescue awareness to around 30 doctors and crew members from helicopter rescue services.

## Urban search and rescue (major building collapses and other complex rescues)

Throughout 2008/09, the NSWFB's Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) capability provided specialised backup response to local rescue units dealing with building collapses and other complex rescues. USAR is also a key component of the State's ability to deal with the consequences of a terrorist attack. Our current USAR capabilities and equipment include:

- **USAR 1:** a Sydney-based purpose-built 32-tonne semi-trailer designed to transport the largest store of USAR equipment in Australia
- **USAR 2 and 3:** transporters with USAR equipment caches based at Newcastle and Wollongong
- **USAR 4:** a specialist reconnaissance vehicle based at Ingleburn in Sydney's southwest.

When major emergencies occurred, initial USAR response was provided by on-duty rescue crews staffing heavy rescue units in Sydney, Newcastle, Gosford and Wollongong, with additional specialist personnel deployed as required. Many of our fire officers are trained to USAR Category 1 provides basic USAR training for all emergency service responders; Category 2 trains USAR taskforce members to carry out complex technical rescue operations and to operate remotely; and Category 3 trains those leading USAR taskforces. Development of our new rescue training facility at Ingleburn will enable training of more Category 2 operators to meet operational needs.

Throughout the year, we continued developing strategic partnerships with other NSW agencies and interstate fire and emergency services with USAR capability. This will ensure a seamless integration of resources if one State needs assistance to deal with a large, prolonged or complex structural collapse rescue operation, such as a major earthquake.

The Commonwealth Government has identified the NSWFB as a critical partner in its national USAR capability development strategy. Because of our advanced USAR expertise, we are playing a key role in providing training, as well as tactical and strategic support, to interstate emergency services which are also developing their USAR capabilities. Throughout the year, we worked with the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, New Zealand Fire Service, South Australian Metropolitan Fire Service, ACT Fire Brigade and the Tasmania Fire Service to develop a national USAR Category 3 training program.



The State's multi-agency USAR capability, under NSWFB leadership, gives NSW an internationally-recognised structural collapse rescue capability, and we are registered with the UN to respond to international requests for help. In April 2009, we sent three highly trained USAR operators to participate in an earthquake simulation exercise in Kathmandu, Nepal. The exercise had participants from 15 countries as well as international responders from the UN and other support agencies.

## Hazardous materials incidents and other hazardous conditions

The NSWFB is responsible for protecting the people, property and environment of NSW from chemical, biological and radiological (CBR) hazards potentially ranging from industrial accidents through to deliberate acts of terrorism. During 2008/09, we responded to 11 714 hazardous materials incidents and other hazardous conditions including powerlines down, electrical shortcircuits and fuel spills, delivering hazmat expertise and equipment across the State through a three-tiered response.

- **Level 1 (standard):** Initial response to hazmat incidents draws on basic equipment, skills and capacity. A Level 1 response is sufficient to deal with most hazmat incidents. All fire officers in the NSWFB's network of 339 fire stations have received hazmat/breathing apparatus training. All NSWFB fire engines are equipped with Level 1 hazmat capability, including fully-encapsulated protective suits, self-contained breathing apparatus, gas detectors, absorbents and CBR kits.
- **Level 2 (intermediate):** This tier provides increased hazmat response capability with additional equipment, skills and capacity. Level 2 capabilities are provided in areas of the State with increased hazmat risk, such as heavy transport and industry or environmentally sensitive areas. Currently the NSWFB has 21 Level 2 stations which are equipped with detection, decontamination and neutralising equipment, as well as having access to chemical databases with information on appropriate emergency response to a wide range

of substances. Thirteen of the Level 2 stations have a waterways response capability and two of these 13 stations (Eden and Nelson Bay) have additional waterways recovery equipment to deal with hazmat spillages in their areas.

- **Level 3 (primary):** Hazmat incidents impact heavily on densely-populated areas of the State, so the NSWFB provides advanced hazmat capabilities for the major metropolitan areas of Sydney, the Central Coast, Newcastle and the Illawarra. Primary hazmat stations deploy comprehensive support, specialised equipment and advanced technical skills at major hazmat incidents as well as providing general backup for Level 1 and 2 stations. The six primary hazmat stations are located at Alexandria, Berkeley Vale, Greenacre, Newcastle, Shellharbour and St Marys.

During 2008/09, the NSWFB's Scientific Advisor responded to numerous hazmat incidents, providing advanced scientific analysis using the mobile laboratory which contains specialised equipment such as a gas chromatograph-mass spectrometer and sampling equipment. This equipment allows accurate assessment of the nature and possible consequences of incidents involving chemical, biological or radiological substances. Our hazmat command/scientific team also responded to or provided technical information at various CBR and explosive hazmat incidents during the year.

The NSWFB's Hazmat Technical Service Centre has operated at Greenacre since mid-2006. The Centre provides major logistics capability, distributing equipment, managing emergency supplies, testing equipment and refilling air cylinders, thus ensuring that adequate supplies of essential equipment are available during emergencies, not only for the NSWFB but also for other government agencies requiring these facilities.

Throughout 2008/09 the Centre, in conjunction with service centres at Newcastle and Shellharbour, carried out the vital role of maintaining, repairing and distributing NSWFB equipment and assets including breathing apparatus, protective clothing, air cylinders, chemical booms and bins, and chemical, biological and radiation detection equipment.



In addition to its day-to-day servicing functions, during the year the Centre also coordinated the purchase and asset management of additional hazmat response and safety equipment including:

- 28 automatic external defibrillators
- 50 major fleet and 100 minor fleet emergency medical treatment packs
- 380 self-contained breathing apparatus sets
- 180 gas-tight chemical suits and 280 reusable splash suits
- 792 lightweight breathing apparatus air cylinders
- 46 thermal imaging cameras
- two new and four upgraded air cylinder filling compressors, bought during the year for installation in 2009/10
- one remote area atmospheric monitoring kit
- a new hazmat vessel for the Sydney area along with 680 metres of containment booms to enhance our waterways protection capability
- 100 CBR suits maintained in service to ensure interagency operability at CBR incidents.

## Bushfire prevention and suppression

Major bushfire activity was thankfully limited during 2008/09. Sydney was our main area of engagement with comparatively few major bushfire emergencies, and most of relatively short duration. Our largest bushfire commitment was in providing assistance to the Victorian bushfire emergency in February 2009.

During the year, we further developed our strategy for managing bushfire risks on the bushland/urban interface in NSWFB Fire Districts. This strategy is a multi-pronged one incorporating hazard reductions, the I-Zone project, community education programs and Community Fire Units (CFUs).

The I-Zone project helps fire officers make effective decisions about how to combat bushfires on the bushland/urban interface. Known fire history is combined with information from the FireAus database to identify high risk locations.

We will continue implementing these programs during 2009/10, including delivering I-Zone and hazard reduction training to our fire officers and setting up CFUs in bushfire-prone areas.

## Interstate and international deployments

In July 2008, NSWFB Inspectors Mark Reilly and Bob McGowan joined fire officers from the Rural Fire Service, Forests NSW and the National Parks and Wildlife Service as part of an Australian and New Zealand firefighting contingent deployed to the USA to help combat severe bushfires burning in Alaska, Texas and California. The two inspectors spent six weeks as Task Force Leaders in incident management teams fighting large blazes in northern California.

In February 2009, 425 NSWFB fire officers participated in firefighting and recovery efforts as part of a national response to the devastating Victorian bushfires. NSWFB fire crews from across the State were sent to Victoria with teams from other NSW emergency services to assist Country Fire Authority (CFA) personnel. NSWFB fire officers were deployed between Flowerdale and Glenburn in the northern ranges, carrying out property protection, patrols, containment operations and extinguishment of spot fires. We also provided liaison and logistics staff and incident management team personnel to the CFA, and fire investigation and research experts for research teams established by the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre.

Since February, the NSWFB has been working closely with other Australian fire services to learn lessons from the Victorian bushfires, in order to improve the effectiveness of our own bushfire operations and of the information and warnings provided to the public.



## Terrorism consequence management

The impact of terrorist threats and strikes continued to be felt around the world during the year with major attacks in Mumbai in November 2008 and in Jakarta in mid 2009. Throughout the year, the NSWFB continued to plan for, develop and implement initiatives to improve its capability for terrorism consequence management. This was achieved in consultation with the NSW Police Force, other emergency services and partner agencies as part of an integrated whole-of-government counter-terrorism strategy.

In 2008 we appointed a second officer to co-locate with the NSW Police Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command. Both officers represent the NSWFB on multi-agency working groups and counter-terrorism committees, further developing inter-agency collaboration, while reviewing and improving NSWFB knowledge of, and arrangements for, dealing with the consequences of terrorist attack.

In July 2008 the NSWFB finalised development of a multi-agency operational guide for response to incidents involving suspicious substances. This guide was distributed to fire, police and ambulance personnel Statewide, and formalises and aligns the response procedures of all three agencies at such incidents. Development of further standard multi-agency operational procedures will continue throughout 2009/10.

NSWFB counter terrorism staff were also involved in preparing, and contributing to, counter-terrorism policies and procedures. The International Fire Service Training Association training manual Emergency Response to Terrorist Attacks was released globally in May 2009. The NSWFB features in this manual, which is recognised as a world's best practice operational resource to help emergency services in developing and implementing counter-terrorism capabilities.

Throughout the year the NSWFB hosted or participated in a number of multi-agency counter-terrorism exercises funded by the National Counter-Terrorism Committee. These included Exercise Sudden Impact conducted in November 2008; multi-agency incident training in regional NSW; and other capability development exercises designed to prepare for, and deal with, the consequences of dangerous releases of chemical, biological and radiological materials. The NSWFB Commissioner is a member of the NSW Government Chief Executive Officers Counter-Terrorism Coordinating Group.

## Aviation operations

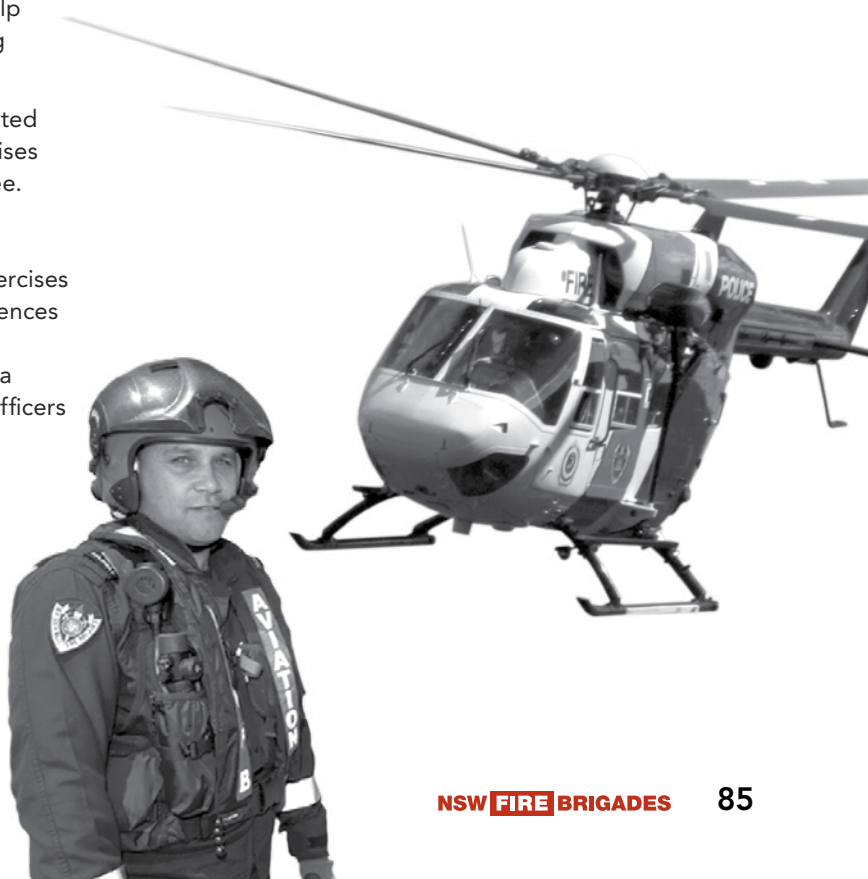
In 2008/09 the NSWFB and NSW Police Force continued to jointly fund and operate Fire Air 1, a BK-117 helicopter based at Bankstown Airport. In early 2009 we signed a revised Memorandum of Understanding with the NSW Police Force for the shared use of this helicopter.

Throughout the year, Fire Air 1 responded to a range of major hazmat, fire and rescue incidents, with NSWFB Aviation Officers flying around 350 hours on major operations and training exercises. The helicopter is also designed to play a primary role in any counter-terrorism response and activities.

Fire Air 1 was upgraded during the year to assist the NSWFB in carrying out its operations. This upgrade included:

- 30-million candle 'night sun' to assist with night operations
- on-screen moving mapping system to provide more efficient navigation and incident location
- faster and more efficient winch
- air-to-ground PA system to enhance communications
- night vision goggle compatible cabin.

The NSWFB's four Aviation Officers were given further training to ensure that OHS and industry requirements were met in safety-sensitive aviation activities. The Aviation Officers continue to provide aerial support for NSWFB incident management as well as delivering training to our operational personnel. During 2008/09, specialist staff received training in helicopter underwater escape, emergency breathing systems, use of night vision goggles and crew resource management competencies.





## Special events

NSWFB staff worked closely throughout the year with the NSW Police Force, event coordination authorities and other State and Commonwealth agencies to assist with planning and preparations for major incidents and events. These included the pandemic (swine flu) threat, 2008 Australian Olympic Team Homecoming Parade, Bathurst 1000, Sydney Running Festival, New Year's Eve celebrations, Anzac Day, Mardi Gras and the Royal Easter Show. We also prepared for our role in the World Masters Games, a major sporting event which will be held in Sydney in October 2009.

During 13–21 July, Sydney hosted World Youth Day 2008 (WYD08) which attracted more than 500 000 visitors, including 120 000 international visitors. In the 18 months prior to this, our staff worked closely with the NSW Police Force, WYD Coordination Authority, and other State and Commonwealth agencies preparing for this event, including arranging fire safety inspections at 750 schools which had been earmarked as accommodation for the WYD pilgrims. More than 460 NSWFB fire officers were directly involved at sites during the week-long event, while logistics, fleet, communications, IT and finance staff provided support.

## Reducing false alarms

False alarms on remotely-monitored automatic fire alarm (AFA) systems can cause unnecessary disruption to business and the community, and divert valuable emergency services resources from responding to genuine emergencies. While most false alarms are caused by faulty fire protection systems, activities like cooking, steam from showers and malicious activity also generate many false alarms. During the year, we continued implementing a number of strategies aimed at reducing false alarm calls, including:

- giving technical advice to local councils and other authorities
  - using statistical information to identify problem systems and smoke detectors which were incorrectly located
  - advising industry groups and alarm monitoring companies on the main causes of false alarms and how these could be prevented
  - encouraging industry to implement codes of practice to ensure better servicing of systems
  - presenting at conferences throughout NSW to raise awareness of false alarms and their consequences
  - conducting training courses and developing and distributing technical information so that fire services and industry use the same approaches to manage false alarms
  - comparing statistical data with other fire services both in Australia and overseas to identify trends and improvements in false alarm prevention strategies
  - evaluating new technologies and products that can assist in reducing false alarms
  - developing tools and aids to assist our fire officers in implementing false alarm management strategies at problem premises in their own areas; this included the *False Alarm Prevention Handbook*, which was distributed to all fire stations.
- From 1 July 2009, the penalty for repeated preventable false alarms rises to \$500, a charge still lower than most other states and the first NSW increase in 14 years. This increase was necessary because the existing charge was not proving a sufficient encouragement for property owners to reduce false alarms by properly maintaining and servicing their AFA systems. False alarms charges do not apply to smoke alarms in private houses.
- visiting 350 premises with recurring false alarms to identify the causes and advise building owners on how these could be rectified



## Develop and maintain strategic working partnerships with other emergency and support services

### Memoranda of understanding and mutual aid agreements

The NSWFB enters into Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) and Mutual Aid Agreements (MAAs) with other agencies and organisations to help achieve agreed outcomes through effective partnerships. The MOUs and MAAs establish collaborative frameworks for cooperation, consultation and information exchange. They may also incorporate protocols for dealing with cross-agency issues. See Appendix 20: Memoranda of Understanding and Other Agreements for a full list of the current agreements between the NSWFB and other organisations. Principal and recent MOUs and MAAs include the following:

- An MOU between the NSWFB and the Rural Fire Service (RFS) ensures a complementary and comprehensive fire service for the community of NSW. This agreement was developed to cover jurisdiction for fires, and requirements to notify each service under identified circumstances. The MOU recognises the complementary urban and rural focus of the two services, and the NSWFB's additional rescue and State-wide hazmat roles.
- Over 100 MAAs have been set up at a local level between the NSWFB and the RFS to further enhance inter-agency communication and community safety. These MAAs enable sharing of resources and provision of a better service to the community.
- In early 2009, the NSWFB and the NSW Police Force signed a revised MOU for shared use of the Fire Air 1 helicopter. The new agreement gives the NSWFB increased access to Police aviation assets and associated technologies, including the capability to transmit live video footage from Police aircraft to our Major Incident Coordination Centre at Alexandria. Other provisions include a dedicated pilot for Fire Air 1, and its use for operational readiness exercises and risk assessments of large or remote sites.
- During the year, the NSWFB and RFS signed a new MOU with Sydney Water. The MOU is aimed at ensuring that the quality of recycled water available from reticulated systems is suitable for the fire services to use for firefighting and training purposes.

## Partnerships in emergency management coordination

The NSW State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) is responsible for ensuring that the State has a robust, effective and flexible system for dealing with emergencies. The NSWFB Commissioner is chair of the SEMC and represents the NSW Government on the Australian Emergency Management Committee; senior NSWFB staff serve on various SEMC subcommittees and working groups.

Emergency Management Australia (EMA) supports the States and Territories in coordinating emergency management capabilities. Senior NSWFB staff chair or participate in various EMA working groups.

### Partnerships between fire services

The Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC) is a national peak body established to improve collaboration and the sharing of expertise and strategic information between fire and emergency services across Australasia. The Commissioner is Deputy President and senior NSWFB staff serve on various AFAC steering committees and working groups.

The *Fire Services Joint Standing Committee Act 1998* established a committee with representation from the NSWFB, RFS, Rural Fire Service Association and Fire Brigade Employees' Union. This Committee and its subcommittees provide forums for regular consultation and cooperation between the two fire services, including the planning and coordination of complementary provision of urban and rural fire services.

### Partnerships in rescue

The NSWFB Commissioner is a member of the State Rescue Board which advises the Minister for Emergency Services on the coordination and provision of rescue services in NSW. The Board was established under the *State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989*. The NSWFB delivers rescue services in conjunction with other agencies including the NSW Police Force, Ambulance Service of NSW, RFS, State Emergency Service and the NSW Volunteer Rescue Association.

### Partnerships in urban search and rescue

In accordance with the *Major Structural Collapse Sub-Plan to the NSW State Disaster Plan*, the NSWFB, as the designated lead agency, continues to develop the State's multi-agency Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) capability. The NSWFB chairs the AFAC USAR Working Group, and also chairs and represents all Australian fire services on the National USAR Working Group established by EMA.

In addition, the Commissioner continues as the Senior End User Representative on the Board of the National USAR Capability Development Project.

The NSWFB represents Australia at the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group and at the International USAR Team Leaders Meeting convened by the United Nations (UN). The NSWFB is a member of the UN's Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team and also of the UN Training Working Group.

### Partnerships in managing hazardous conditions incidents

When responding to incidents, staff from the NSWFB and the NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water work closely together to effectively manage chemical spills and other hazardous conditions emergencies and minimise their impact. The NSWFB is represented on the National Chemical, Biological and Radiological (CBR) Steering Committee established by EMA. The NSWFB also participates in an Australian delegation to the International CBR Consequence Management Group.

### Partnerships in counter terrorism

The NSWFB continues to work closely with the NSW Police Force, Ambulance Service of NSW, Australian Defence Force and other stakeholders in counter-terrorism. We collaborate in developing operational policies and procedures, and we plan for and conduct training exercises to ensure that all agencies work closely and effectively to ensure an integrated terrorism consequence management response. The NSWFB Commissioner is a member of the NSW Government Chief Executive Officers Counter-Terrorism Coordinating Group and provides advice to the Cabinet Counter-Terrorism Committee. The NSWFB Manager and Deputy Manager Counter Terrorism and Aviation continue to work within the NSW Police Counter Terrorism and Special Tactics Command to ensure close interaction and interoperability.

### Partnerships in bushfire prevention and suppression

The NSWFB is represented on the Bushfire Coordinating Committee, which was established under the *Rural Fires Act 1997*. This committee provides a forum for consultation and cooperation between all state firefighting agencies as well as environment and land management agencies. It also advises the RFS Commissioner and the Minister for Emergency Services on bushfire prevention and suppression matters.

We also coordinate a number of Bushfire Management Committees in NSWFB Fire Districts. These Committees play a vital role in bringing together different stakeholders, identifying areas of potential risk on the bushland/urban interface in local areas, and developing operational and risk management plans.

In addition, the NSWFB participates with other fire and land management agencies and research partners in Australia and New Zealand in the operation of the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre which carries out bushfire research and collaboration.

### Assist the community and business after emergencies and disasters

The Australian Incident Reporting System (AIRS) is a system used for collecting, recording and reporting information about responses to incidents and emergencies attended by Australian fire services. The information put into AIRS by NSWFB fire officers is used by many of our stakeholders. During 2008/09, insurance companies, loss adjusters, solicitors and building owners and occupiers used AIRS information, together with post-incident analysis by our fire investigators to help in finalising insurance claims so that those impacted by emergency incidents could recover financially as quickly as possible. This information was also used by NSW Police Force and the State Coroner in their investigations.





## Responding to natural disasters

When natural disasters such as floods, hail, strong winds and severe thunderstorms occur, the State Emergency Service (SES) is the lead agency. During the year, the NSWFB, under the terms of a Mutual Aid Agreement with the SES, joined the SES and other organisations in responding to a range of severe weather incidents and natural disasters. We provided major support both during and after such incidents, making fire crews, vehicles and equipment available as needed.

The biggest of these incidents during the year occurred when severe storms swept through the mid north coast in May 2009. Five NSWFB strike teams were deployed to the Clarence/Nambucca region to assist local crews and the SES with flood and storm response operations. The additional teams we sent included 21 extra fire engines and more than 80 fire officers. These resources were in addition to local resources comprising 32 fire engines and 128 fire officers.

## Fundraising and practical support

Emergency services workers are very aware of the human cost of incidents to which they respond. The NSWFB and its staff help the community to recover after tragedies and disasters in various ways, including through financial support. Many of our employees donate regularly to charities and organisations such as the Burns Unit at The Children's Hospital, Westmead. These funds are used to buy vital equipment and employ specialised staff to assist the children's rehabilitation. As well as giving personally, our staff also encourage the public to join them in supporting these causes.

In August 2008, the NSWFB combined with RFS to enter a team in the Blacktown to Batemans Bay Variety Bash. Besides promoting safety messages along the way, the team raised over \$25 000 for Variety, a charity which supports Australia's sick, disadvantaged and special needs children.

In November 2008, the NSWFB handed over \$65 000 to the Burns Unit at the Children's Hospital, Westmead, all generously donated by our staff via payroll deductions. Since 1996, the NSWFB has donated over \$1.6 million to the Burns Unit through funds raised by staff donations and community fundraising activities.

In March 2009, fire officers cycled from Campbelltown to Wagga Wagga, a distance of over 400 kilometres, in only four days. This charity bike ride raised a further \$33 100 for the Burns Unit, as well as providing opportunities for spreading fire safety messages in country towns.

In April 2009, NSWFB staff donated more than \$64 000 to the Red Cross Victorian Bushfire Appeal which was used to assist people and communities affected by the devastating bushfires of February 2009.

NSWFB staff also support the John Hunter Children's Hospital, Newcastle and other burns charities through personal donations and proceeds from the annual Newcastle Firefighters Ball. Further donations in 2008/09 meant that over the last decade, our staff have raised more than \$200 000 for these causes. These funds have enabled purchase of equipment to treat burns patients, including 'Burnie', a lifelike electronic dummy used by medical teams to practise treating burns.

Since 2002, Temora fire officers have run the kiosk at the Temora Aviation Museum on flying days, with proceeds distributed to various community organisations. Around \$168 000 has been raised and donated over the last six years. In 2008, off-duty NSWFB fire officers worked more than 2100 volunteer hours at the kiosk, raising more than \$43 000 for local charities.

## Use information and communication technology effectively to support response and recovery

### Information and communication technology strategy

The NSWFB's Information and Communication Technology Strategy outlines the improvements and investment planned in the areas of knowledge and information management, and information and communication technology, in order to support front line service delivery.

Technology plays a critical role in dispatching the appropriate level of response to incidents as quickly as possible. To ensure continuing high levels of service, our computer-aided dispatch system has been funded for enhancement over the next two years.

As part of ongoing business improvement, we are eliminating inefficient manual processes, as well as replacing or upgrading existing systems for corporate services and operational support. We replaced our human resources/payroll system during the year. Other projects nearing completion are new systems for health and safety, business intelligence, and enterprise document and records management.

These major ICT projects will improve our resource management and corporate administration, enhance reporting capabilities, return operational time to higher-value community service delivery, and improve delivery of critical information to frontline staff responding to emergencies and natural disasters.

We are continuing to work with other emergency service agencies such as the Rural Fire Service and the State Emergency Service, with the aim of reducing costs by sharing systems where possible.

## Telecommunications

The NSWFB relies heavily on its telecommunications infrastructure to enable rapid response to emergency incidents and coordination of emergency staff and other resources. This has driven considerable investment in recent years in telecommunications and our computer-aided dispatch system (FireCAD). However, there is a continuing need to ensure appropriate capability through planned investment in telecommunications priorities. The NSWFB Telecommunications Strategic Plan identified a number of key projects to enhance services and to maximise the use of whole-of-government telecommunications infrastructure and services. During 2008/09, we completed or progressed the following projects.

- Adopted ICEMS (Inter-CAD Emergency Messaging System), a new electronic data system for transferring emergency incident information. We are using ICEMS between our four Communication Centres, making us the first Australian agency to adopt this system. An ICEMS network has also been established with the NSW Police Force, Roads and Traffic Authority and the Ambulance Service of NSW, and is due to go live in late 2009.
- Continued to evolve telecommunications services to Government Telecommunications Agreements (GTAs). The resulting savings were used to implement new technologies, improve telecommunications infrastructure, and improve existing technologies through wider access and more robust disaster recovery functionality. The new GTAs facilitate a simplified billing process which assists budget forecasting.
- Progressed plans to upgrade the existing mission-critical, real time computer-aided dispatch (CAD), telephone and voice recording systems at all NSWFB Communication Centre sites to an integrated CAD/telephony/audio recording system. The benefits of the new system include improved operator efficiency; the ability to support more complex resource dispatch and management; and enhanced ability to manage times of peak activity by sharing call loads between Communication Centres.
- Migrated the FireCOM wide area network, which is used to support mission-critical CAD systems, associated applications and supporting systems, to an IP-based service providing higher bandwidth and availability.
- Implemented an enterprise licence for the BOSS system, allowing all staff to access to near real time and historical incident data; however sensitive information remains protected.
- Extended the Rescue Coordinator callout hotline, which coordinates rescue and other multi-agency responses, to our Wollongong and Newcastle Communication Centres and other emergency services.
- Commenced planning for the upgrade of the Government Radio Network (GRN) from analog to digital, which will affect all NSWFB radio transceivers and communication centre equipment. Expanded the Private Mobile Radio (PMR) Network to further improve coverage, particularly along major highways (beyond GRN coverage, the NSWFB uses the PMR network to support incident-related radio communications).
- Worked with NSW Department of Commerce and industry to implement a broadband network between our Communication Centres, a standby site and the GRN's Operational Communication Centre.
- Installed multifunction devices (eg combined fax, copier, printer and scanner) to replace existing single function devices such as printers and fax machines at over 200 fire stations. The remaining fire stations will be upgraded over the next two years.
- Implemented an interactive voice directory (IVY), which gives users quick easy direct phone access to staff without going through an operator. IVY is accessed externally by dialling 13FIRE/133473.
- Continued trialling mobile data terminals in 20 Sydney fire engines in order to identify requirements for a full roll-out. Also successfully trialled a prototype Duty Commander in-vehicle computer. Equipped all primary fire engines with mobile phones to supplement existing radio communications.
- Reviewed and updated the policy regarding allocation and use of personal communication devices. All senior officers are provided with a Blackberry if required, and wireless aircards are issued to laptop users to enable remote use. The use of wireless technology will continue to grow and enhance connectivity through the use of services such as NextG.

## IT infrastructure, security and support

In order to successfully host and deliver operational systems, the NSWFB has established a flexible and efficient IT infrastructure. Continual improvements to mobile data, wireless access and internet portals give our fire officers secure remote 24/7 access to corporate systems and operational information.

Improvements/achievements during 2008/09 included the following:

- Continued implementing a shared services strategy for IT infrastructure. A shared NSW Government gateway was designed and established at Australian Technology Park to connect the NSWFB, RFS, SES, Emergency Management NSW (EMNSW), and the Department of Lands. NSWFB directories were expanded to allow staff from these agencies and the NSW Police Force to share our enterprise systems and communications assets using their existing usernames and passwords. We also relocated the EMNSW data centre and networks to Homebush, and established a 100MB connection between the RFS incident control centre and NSWFB data centres.
- Completed the high speed 2.5GB fibre connection to our disaster recovery data centres, enabling synchronisation of data and applications and performance of backups.
- Installed wireless access points for desktop computers and printing at 100 fire stations, and provided in-vehicle computer access points to dock and update mobile data systems.
- Continued developing an enterprise video streaming and computer-based learning strategy. Enhancements to our network have allowed simulcast of key events such as the Australasian Rescue Challenge, which was streamed over the NSWFB network and across the Internet to international rescue agencies.
- Developed, documented and tested the IT business continuity plan, including procedures for our high availability disaster recovery data centres.
- Conducted, in consultation with the Help Desk Association of Australia, a major review of our IT support services, staffing and tools. Following the review, we set up a consolidated single contact point service desk supported by an enterprise-wide service management system based on industry best practice.
- Improved tracking of licences for standard operating systems, and developed new work practices for IT procurement, asset management and stock control.
- Implemented an information security management framework based on the Standard AS/NZS ISO/IEC 27001:2006 Information Security Management. Carried out a risk assessment of the security, integrity, and availability of NSWFB information assets hosted by our data centre, and implemented controls to address identified risks.





## Develop electronic tools and systems to improve organisational business processes

During the year, the NSWFB developed a range of electronic tools and systems to improve its business processes.

- Developed a new geographical information system viewer called SEVEN, which incorporates maps, satellite photos and other spatial information in a browser-based viewer. SEVEN provides real time information about current actions being undertaken by the NSWFB. It also provides critical information about infrastructure, buildings, location of fire stations, hydrants, water mains, data about previous incidents, mapping of exclusion zones (including address information) and live weather data. SEVEN is used by our fire officers to familiarise themselves with their local area, prepare pre-incident plans, manage incidents and accurately locate incidents for reporting.
- Developed a new business intelligence reporting solution called Strategic Reporting System. This application provides improved data extraction and warehousing capability, and more powerful tools for users. It also enables decentralisation of business intelligence, giving all NSWFB managers the information they need to make tactical and strategic decisions.
- Rolled out SAM (System to Automate Manual disposition), our new online rostering and timesheet system, in October 2008. SAM streamlines and automates the processes used by our Duty Commanders who manage the daily process of filling temporary vacancies at fire stations. SAM has eliminated paper timesheets, simplified the twice-daily shift change process for Duty Commanders, and gives our management immediate absence and overtime data. The NSWFB is the first Australian fire and rescue service to manage the disposition process for fire officers online.
- Implemented an electronic pre-incident plan database at all fire stations after it was used successfully in planning for our role in APEC and World Youth Day. The system replaces paper-based systems used previously, and captures relevant information about infrastructure which assists in managing emergency incidents. Plans can be accessed from any NSWFB location including incident control vehicles and senior officers' laptops.
- Selected Oracle's enterprise content management system via tender as the NSWFB's new electronic document and records management system. A pilot of the new system will be carried out later in 2009. This system will provide the foundation for managing our web content and our electronic documents and records.
- Implemented the SAP human resources/payroll system, replacing the previous StarGarden system. This new system is enabling us to manage human resources and payroll processes more effectively. In February 2009, we began a collaborative project with the SES, RFS and EMNSW to use the NSWFB's SAP system in a shared services arrangement. EMNSW is using the SAP financial module, with the SES and RFS planning to follow over the next two years.

## Network of Communication Centres

During 2008/09, the NSWFB maintained a highly developed and extremely reliable network of four emergency call-taking, dispatch, coordination and Communication Centres located in Sydney, Newcastle, Wollongong and Katoomba. These centres are staffed by fire officers specially trained for the demanding role as the first point of contact for managing all fire emergency calls for NSW, including calls for the Rural Fire Service.

Most calls originated from Triple Zero phone calls, from automatic or other fire alarms, or by direct line from Police, Ambulance or other services. Using FireCAD, the NSWFB's sophisticated computer-aided dispatch system, Communication Centres responded to calls by sending out the appropriate resources based on the type of incident, its location and the nearest available suitable units. For example, the initial response to a chemical spill is very different from that for a factory fire.

Where an incident was identified as being located within a Rural Fire District or an agreed mutual response area, the RFS was notified to respond. We also notified the SES, NSW Volunteer Rescue Association, NSW Police Force, Ambulance Service of NSW, and other government agencies and utilities when required.

During the year, NSWFB communications staff continually updated information within FireCAD, including changes to address records and Fire District boundaries. Two major projects were implemented to improve accuracy of address and location data within FireCAD. Mutual Aid Agreement data was updated, ensuring the most suitable response of NSWFB and RFS resources; this involved updating 180 434 records. In addition, data cleansing was used to compare FireCAD address and location data against other recognised databases, such as the Australian Postal Address File.

Our Communication Centres continued their excellent emergency call-taking performance in 2008/09, with the average answer time for Triple Zero calls being less than 3.5 seconds. Performance against the national benchmark of answering 90% of Triple Zero calls within 10 seconds was also outstanding, with 95.97% of fire emergency calls answered within 10 seconds.