

# Summer News

from the Christmas Hills Fire Brigade

november 2009



photo Alwyn Hanson

in November's newsletter...

Fire Restrictions  
Brigade area and stations  
Brigade Management Team  
new Fire Danger Rating

## Fire Restrictions for 2009 - 2010

In Victoria, the Fire Restrictions are introduced on a Shire by Shire basis, depending on how dry the vegetation in the paddocks and forest is. In the Christmas Hills area there are four nearby local Shires – Nillumbik, Yarra Ranges, Murrundindi and Manningham – but the restrictions may come on in each of them at slightly different times. However, the Fire Restrictions are likely to be on sometime in November, and certainly before Christmas. Watch the local paper for the exact dates. Once the restrictions are on, you cannot burn off *anything* in the open - not even small piles of leaves or rubbish. You can have a BBQ, as long as it is in a properly constructed fireplace, which is clear all around and there is an adult present and water available.

You can check what Fire Restrictions apply to you by logging into the CFA website at <http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au>

### Café Benders

Come and join your neighbours for coffee and cake at Café Benders, held every 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of the month, starting about 10.30am, south station, Catani Blvd, Bend of Islands. It's mostly a social event, but the money raised by the Friends of Christmas Hills Fire Brigade, who organize Café Benders, goes to the Brigade to help buy equipment and other bits and pieces we need. Café Benders raises about \$1000 every year – that's a fair bit of cake and lots of really good coffee! If you haven't been before, come along – you're most welcome!

### Chills Lounge

Chills Lounge started out as a "happy hour", but we were all having such a good time that it became "happy hours" and we thought we should add some food to the evening! Now it is a BYO drinks and BBQ, starting about 5.30pm every 1<sup>st</sup> Friday of the month – come for as long or as little time as you can – we are pleased to have Brigade members, neighbours, kids – the lot! Chills Lounge happens at the north station in Ridge Road, Christmas Hills.

# The Brigade Area – Christmas Hills & Bend of Islands

We cover a long narrow stretch of country from about Marshalls Road and Buttermans Track, down to the Yarra River in the Bend of Islands, and from Skyline Road above Yarra Glen across towards Watsons Creek.

Christmas Hills Brigade is a small brigade of about 40 members. The Brigade is an emergency response organization, which means we have to respond to all calls, 24 hours a day and 7 days a week.

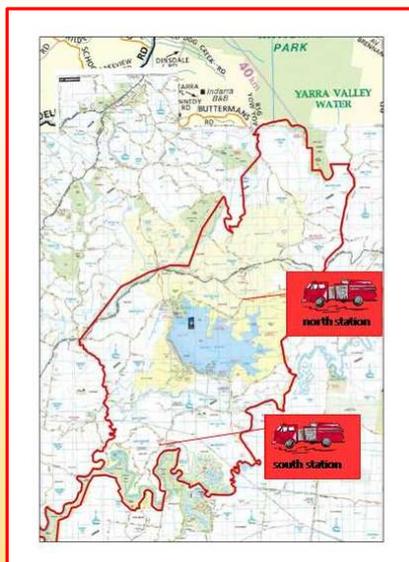
We are all volunteers, and fit our emergency response around jobs, kids, families, sport and all the other things we all cram into our lives! Not all members are active firefighters - we have about 15 members who turn out to incidents regularly, another 10 who do so irregularly, and then another group of non-firefighter members.

It isn't only bushfires that we attend. We also get called out, via the 000 Emergency number, to car accidents, rubbish fires, house fires, hazardous materials incidents, and an assortment of other types of calls. We also turn out to support our neighbouring brigades – Yarra Glen, St Andrews, Panton Hill and Kangaroo Ground.

It is always a bit of a challenge to get our Tankers turned out to all incidents, because the Brigade area of responsibility is divided into two by the Sugarloaf Reservoir. Because of this, we are a bit unusual as we have two stations rather than one. The main station is on the corner of Ridge Road and Muir Road in Christmas Hills, and was only opened in October last year, and the second one is near the corner of Henley Road and Catani Boulevard in the Bend of Islands. Two stations are OK, but it doubles our maintenance workload, and our travel times when we are called on to turn out to emergency incidents.

Brigade membership is spread between both Christmas Hills and the Bend of Island communities, but we rarely have an oversupply of active members! We can always use more!!!

## Christmas Hills Fire Brigade area of responsibility



Even though we are all volunteers, the training we undertake enables us to provide our community with a professional level of emergency response. Why do we do it? The answer is a bit different for each of us, but in the end we are all aware that the next emergency call that comes across our pagers may be for one of us – a family member, our neighbour, a visitor – so in the end it's really up to us to look after our own community!!



north station in Ridge Road, Christmas Hills

The Brigade has a number of “appliances” – two 4WD Isuzu Tankers, and a new 4WD Nissan “ultra-light tanker” similar to the “slip-on” units used by Parks Victoria and the Department of Sustainability and Environment. We also have a trailer which carries a quick-fill pump which can be set up to pump from a dam, or from one of the dozen or so concrete water tanks distributed through the Brigade area.

Maintaining the two stations and the Tankers in a condition where they are always ready to respond to an emergency is pretty much a full time job. Maintaining the skills and training of Brigade members also requires a constant effort and commitment from members, and we train regularly every Sunday morning, with extra skills training fitted in on weekends or in the evenings as it is required.



south station in Catani Blvd, Bend of Islands



### Christmas Hills Fire Brigade website

If you want to find out more about the Brigade, who we are, what we do, and for comments on fire related issues of interest, you might like to look at our website...

<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~chfb/>

## Brigade Management Team

The Brigade is run on a day by day basis by a team made up of the captain, lieutenants, secretary and communications officer, and various other members with appropriate expertise, time or interest in particular areas. Many other members, the Friends group, and wider community members contribute. There's always more work to be done than anyone really has time for, and we are a 24 hour emergency service, so everything has to be done *now* to keep us in a state of readiness.

If you need to contact the brigade, the Captain is Dianne Simmons (0417 386 279), the 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant is Mike Skewes (0408 368 578), and the Secretary is Kevin Heeley (9730 1704). Other members of the Brigade Management Team are

Quentin Mattiske – 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant

Peter Russ – 3<sup>rd</sup> Lieutenant

John Stasytis – 4<sup>th</sup> Lieutenant

Neill Kamminga – immediate past Captain

Alan Bonny or Marie Krause – Friends of Christmas Hills Fire Brigade, and Café Benders, and Jane Russ – Chills Lounge

John McCallum – webmaster & Robyn Adams – Communications Officer

*recent turnouts* included a tree fire caused by a lightning strike in the Bend of Islands and a car accident, also attended by police and ambulance, on Skyline Road, Christmas Hills.

## new Fire Danger Rating System

Check out the new Fire Danger Rating System on the CFA website at <http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au>



**CATASTROPHIC** If you live in a bushfire prone area the safest option is to leave the night before, or early in the morning

**EXTREME** The safest option is to leave early in the day if you live in a bushfire prone area and your Bushfire Survival Plan is to leave. Only stay if your home is well prepared, well constructed and you can actively defend it.

**SEVERE** The safest option is to leave early in the day if you live in a bushfire prone area and your Bushfire Survival Plan is to leave. Only stay if your home is well prepared and you can actively defend it.

**VERY HIGH** If you live in a bushfire prone area and your Bushfire Survival Plan is to leave, the safest option is to leave at the beginning of a day.

**HIGH & LOW-MODERATE** Check your Bushfire Survival Plan

send your email address to [robyn.adams@members.cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:robyn.adams@members.cfa.vic.gov.au) if you would like to receive the newsletter via email