

summer news

from the Christmas Hills Fire Brigade

December 2009

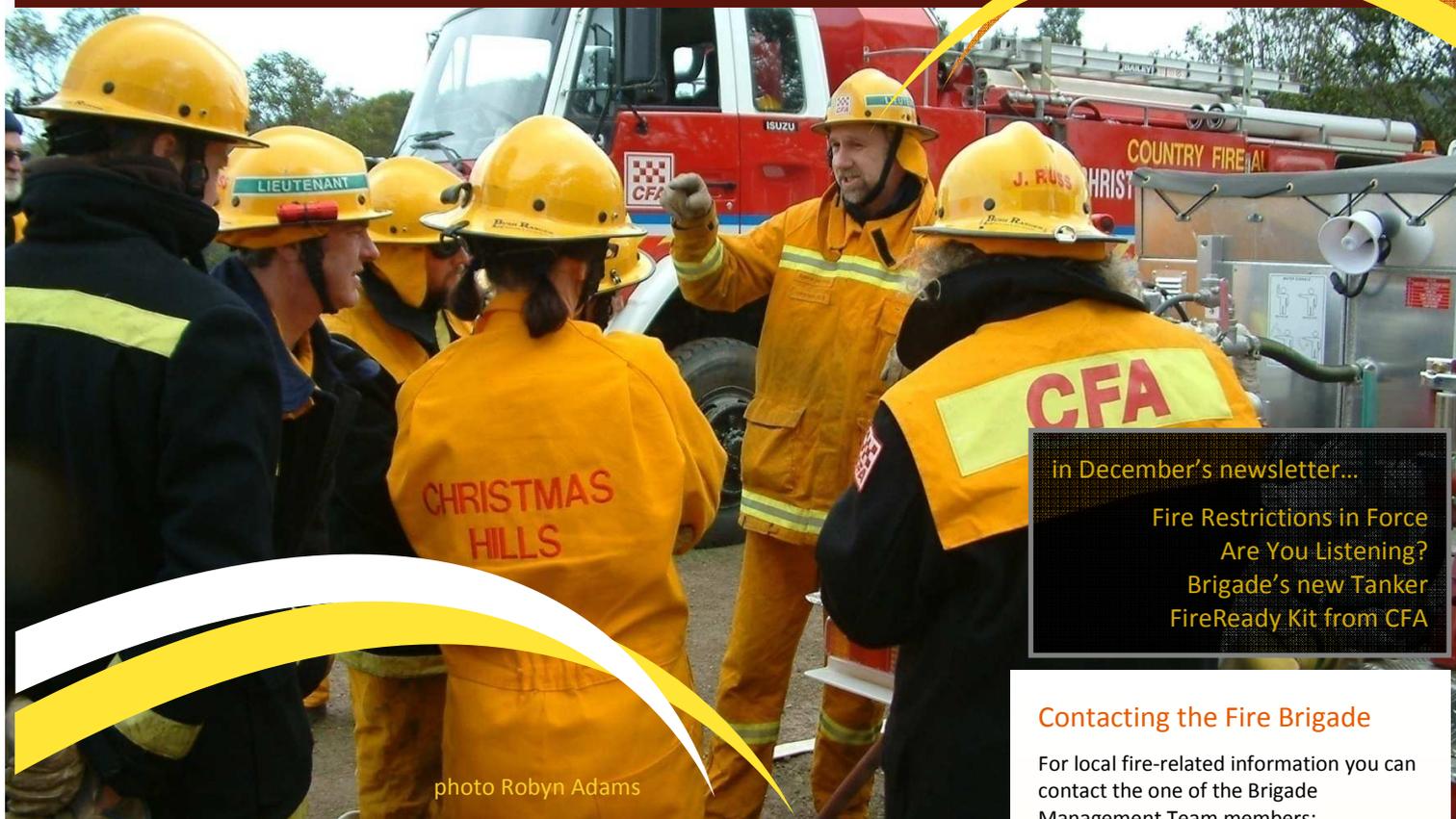


photo Robyn Adams

in December's newsletter...

Fire Restrictions in Force
Are You Listening?
Brigade's new Tanker
FireReady Kit from CFA

Contacting the Fire Brigade

For local fire-related information you can contact the one of the Brigade Management Team members:

Captain Dianne Simmons 0417 386 279

1st Lieut. Mike Skewes 0408 368 578

2nd Lieut. Quentin Mattiske 0412 226 042

3rd Lieut. Peter Russ 0418 345 883

4th Lieut. John Stasytis 9730 1603

Secretary Kevin Heeley (0439 301 722)

Communications Officer Robyn Adams
0417 326 238

Contacting the CFA

For information about Fire Restrictions, Fire Danger Ratings, the new Household Self-Assessment Tool, notices of the FireReady meetings, Total Fire Bans or BBQ restrictions you can contact the CFA via its website <http://www.cfa.vic.gov>.

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for all emergencies

fire ambulance police

Now In Force -Fire Restrictions for this summer

The Fire Restrictions are *now in force* in Nillumbik, Murrundindi & Manningham (30 Nov), and Yarra Ranges (14 Dec). This means that you can't burn off *anything* in the open without a permit. If you need a permit you should contact the Shire's Fire Prevention Officer. You can still have a gas, electric BBQ or a solid-fuel BBQ (wood/charcoal) as long it's in a properly constructed BBQ or pit, is the minimum required for cooking, and there is an adult and water present at all times. You *can't* burn off piles of wood, branches, building materials and the like and claim you are having a barbie!! Check the details at <http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au>.

You *can* continue to prepare your property for the fire season - remove flammable materials away from buildings - wood piles, bushes, the mat, hanging baskets, the mower fuel, the building material piled up on the deck - all are potential ignition points for embers!!

Are You Listening?

Scanners and listening sets are one way to find information about emergency incidents in your local area, but many people don't really know what channels to listen to, or how to interpret what they hear. Can we help?

When an emergency fire call is rung into the 000 number, Christmas Hills brigade members receive an ALERT message over the pagers they carry. This message contains the minimum amount of information needed for us to respond – a location and a brief description of the incident. When the Tankers leave the station they communicate by radio with a central dispatch room (located in Glen Waverley) called VicFire, and all further information and messages that are sent or received are transmitted via radio. If you have a listening set or scanning radio set to the correct channels, you can hear all of this radio communication.



However, there are lots of channels, and the radio channel being used by the Tankers will often change during an incident, to avoid congestion on the main dispatch channel (Channel 54 at 162.6875 MHz). Unless you know which channels we change over to (called “go-to” channels), you will not then be able to hear the radio traffic.

To further complicate matters for the casual listener, the radio messages transmitted between the Tankers and VicFire are in abbreviated, highly formalized language – jargon if you don't know what they mean, but easy to interpret if you do.

What Am I Listening to?

If you have a scanner/listening set, and would like to know how to listen to it effectively, the Brigade is running a listening set “how to” session on Sunday January 17 2010 at the North Station in Ridge Road, Christmas Hills from 10am to 12 noon. Come along and bring your scanner with you!

We will cover the radio messages and what they mean, and the radio channels (frequencies) most often used in this area.

Christmas Hills, Kangaroo Ground, the Warrandyte area and Yarra Glen are all dispatched by VicFire on Channel 54 with a frequency of 162.6875 MHz, but St Andrews and the Kinglake area use Channel 61 with frequency of 163.5625 MHz.

These two frequencies work quite well within the Christmas Hills Brigade area, but the reception is dependent on location, and there are some “black spots” with no reception, so they may not work for you.

There are other frequencies associated with these channels – come and find out!

Is Your Number Up?

During one of our recent turn-outs to a bushfire it was extremely difficult to actually locate the property – it was a corner property where the property address and the entrance were on different roads. There was a number, but it couldn't be easily seen from the direction the Tankers approached from. The Rural Numbering System is a simple way to identify your property. It's based on distance from one end of the road to all the gates along that road. For example, 117 Reeves Road is actually 1.17km from the junction of Reeves Road and the Eltham-Yarra Glen Road, and 820 Skyline Road is 8.2km from the junction of Skyline Road and Henley Road. You can work out your rural number by starting at the nearest number, or the road junction, and using your car trip-meter to measure the distance to your gate. Measure it, and put up a number that we can see from both directions! Odd numbers are all on the left hand side of the road, and even numbers are on the right hand side.

For emergency vehicles, it is really important that you have an identifying number, and if you use the Rural Numbering System, we can pretty easily find you using this “distance” system.

So if you call 000 because you think your number's up, then make sure your number's up!



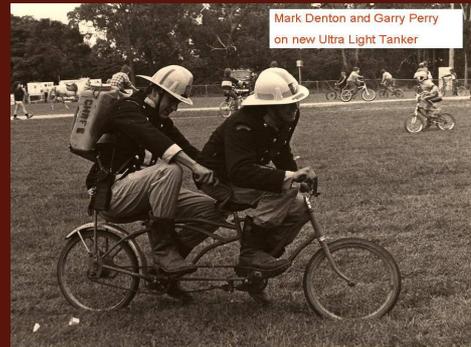
Christmas Hills Fire Brigade website

Check out the “new look” Christmas Hills web site if you’d like to find out more about the Brigade, and for links to fire related issues of interest.

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

Tanker 3 – thank you!

Earlier this year the Brigade took delivery of a new “ultra-light” tanker – a 4WD Nissan with a 550 litre water tank and pump mounted on the tray. The “ultra-light’ we had in past years (below) was retired quite some time ago!



Mark Denton and Garry Perry on new Ultra Light Tanker

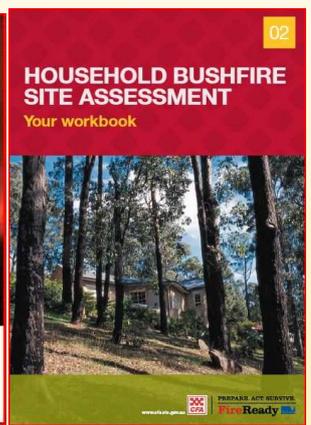
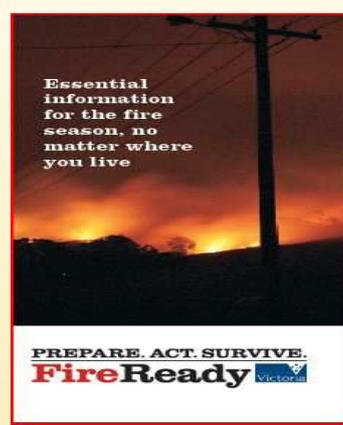
Keys for the new Tanker were presented to Captain Dianne Simmons by local MLA member and Parliamentary Secretary for Emergency Services, Danielle Green. The new Tanker gives us the capacity for a quick response to incidents and it is more maneuverable in some “tight” situations – skinny tracks and around people’s houses. Have you ever looked critically at your own driveway access, rural road number and turning points around your house - it may look OK to you for your car, but would a Tanker (or ambulance) be able to get to you, and out again, if required? Can you improve your emergency access ?

recent turnouts included trees blocking roads in Christmas Hills after the strong winds we have been having , and a couple of burn-offs which kicked on during our first Total Fire Ban in November.

Prepare Act Survive

The Country Fire Authority has produced a collection of publications called the **FireReady Kit** to help you understand your bushfire risk, prepare your property and develop a Bushfire Survival Plan based on your decision to leave early or to actively defend your property.

The Kit includes five linked publications plus some smaller brochures. The five linked publications have been designed to work together in a sequence. You can order a Kit by phoning the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667, or by downloading it off the CFA website <http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au>



Thank You to Ken & Sue King at the Kangaroo Ground Post Office for donating their time to distribute the November newsletter to Bend of Islands residents – much appreciated!

send your email address to robyn.adams@members.cfa.vic.gov.au if you would like to receive the newsletter via email