

2012 Community Letter

A volunteer brigade is a community organisation – dependant upon local residents donating their time, energy, and even money for the safety of the entire community. The brigade needs your help to survive.

You can help in a number of ways:

- Consider becoming an active fire-fighter with the brigade. We need more trained and active people to improve the speed of our response and ensure that we have enough crews to cover holidays and major fires – making the whole area safer. As an active fire-fighter you'll receive all the knowledge and experience you need to know how to protect you, your family, and your property. We train at the station from 6:30pm on the first and third Wednesday evenings of the month. Feel free to contact any of the office bearers if you want to find out more.
- Make a donation. Donations to brigade are put towards the incidental costs in running the brigade. Donations over \$2 are tax deductible and we will ensure that you receive a receipt for your donation if you send a cheque with your name and address to:

Wallaroo Volunteer Rural Fire Brigade, 468 Wallaroo Road, Wallaroo NSW 2618

The Bush Fire Danger period will commence on 01 October 2012 and it is expected to be an above average fire season. The above average forecast is due to the abundant grass growth from the high amount of rain from two strong La Niña events seen in the past two years across the eastern seaboard and South Australia. The recent rain experienced across many parts of New South Wales has been welcome – but it's also brought an unwelcome threat for many people. The rain has led to increased grass growth across the local area and as this grass begins to dry out, there's an increased risk of grass fires. Grass fires can be especially dangerous because they can start quickly and spread rapidly, catching people off-guard. They can be very hot and produce large amounts of heat which can kill anyone caught out in the open.

It is far too late to prepare yourself for a bush fire after you smell the smoke. The time to prepare you and your property is now. Have you cleaned your gutters? Moved the firewood away from the house? Tested your pumps? Mown your fire-breaks? These tasks need to be completed over the next two months.

Bush Fire Survival Plan

Your preparation and decisions are the most critical aspects in determining your survival in a fire. Our brigade, and all those around us, will do our best, but we cannot be everywhere, or prepare for every possibility.

To assist individual preparation the RFS has developed a Bush Fire Survival plan – a tool to help you determine what you need to do and what decisions you need to make well before there is a fire. This plan is available on the RFS website (www.rfs.nsw.gov.au) or you can contact the Yass Fire Control Centre or one of the brigade officers to obtain one.

Prepare. Act. Survive.

We're all familiar with the "Stay or Go" phrase. There has been considerable criticism of this phrase – in many ways it was too "last minute" to cover the complexity of what is required in preparing to face a bush fire. The nationwide message being used – Prepare. Act. Survive.

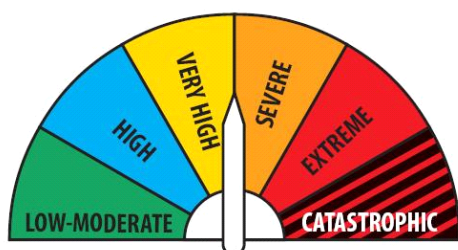
Prepare: Have a plan, prepare yourself, and prepare your property well before any fire.

Act: Don't wait and see, or to be told what to do. Keep informed and follow your plan.

Survive: Have contingency plans. Remember that homes can be rebuilt – lives cannot.

Catastrophic

You may be aware that new levels of "Severe" and "Catastrophic" have been added to the old fire danger ratings.



The "Catastrophic" rating is recognition that on some days – such as we saw in Victoria in February 2009 and locally in 2003 – fires that cause significantly more destruction. On these days there is potential for a significant loss of life and property and even homes that are well prepared and built to the highest standards of construction may be destroyed.

These ratings are already in effect. Details of what they mean can be found on the RFS website (www.rfs.nsw.gov.au). Listen to ABC and local radio for information as they broadcast the Fire Danger Ratings each day for both ACT and NSW. Wallaroo is in the Southern Tablelands area and Southern Ranges Weather district.

Public Alerts

A national standard alert system has been implemented to keep you informed of fire threats. The alerts will specify the area under threat and be issued at three levels:

Emergency Warning

where there is the highest level of risk to life – the Standard Emergency Warning Signal will be played on radio, television, the RFS website and 1800 697 737 information line.

Watch and Act

where people need to be aware of a fire and take action to prepare yourself, your family, and your neighbours.

Advice

to keep you informed and up to date with developments.

There is a lot to consider in preparing you and your property for the bush fire season. Similarly there is a lot of new community information being presented by the Rural Fire Service. A four page letter does not provide sufficient room to go into detail of all you need to know or consider. To obtain further information please visit the NSW Rural Fire Service website (www.rfs.nsw.gov.au) or contact one of the brigade members.

Permits

The start of the Bush Fire Danger period means that there is a legal requirement for you to have a permit to light or maintain a fire in the open. To organise a permit please contact the Captain or the Senior Deputy Captain about a week in advance of your planned burn (numbers below). If you intend to do any burning, organise a permit as soon as possible, as the dry grasses are likely to restrict the issuing of permits. You are required to notify your neighbours and the Fire Control Centre in Yass at least 24 hours in advance. Remember that all permits are cancelled if a Total Fire Ban is declared or the forecast fire danger is Very High or above.

Office bearers for the 2012/2013 fire season.

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|---------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Captain | Neil Shepherd | 0418 628 095 |
| Snr. Deputy Captain | Andrew Price | 0405 141 597 |
| Deputy Captain | Geoff Morris | 0407188 192 |
| Deputy Captain | Peter Vincent | 0415 630 560 |
| Deputy Captain | Aaron Vincent | 0401 954 888 |
| Deputy Captain | Shane Allen | 0419 283 739 |
| President | Rod Roberts | 0407 008 104 |
| Secretary | Chris Reimer | 0414 610 429 |
| Treasurer | Mike Textor | 0408 825 281 |

Wallaroo Bushfire brigade seeks new members

Wallaroo Volunteer Bushfire Brigade is seeking new members to join its ranks to address the worrying fact that very few active volunteers currently live in the Wallaroo area. Not only is the brigade struggling to operate with little more than 20 active members, many of its volunteers live well outside our brigade area, many residing in the ACT.

This means some brigade members have to travel some distance to react to incidents in the Wallaroo area. The extra time it takes brigade members to travel to the fire shed can make a significant difference in an emergency situation where every minute counts.

At the end of the day the brigade simply needs more volunteers, both living in our community and outside it, to call on in an emergency. It is time that the community of Wallaroo starts thinking about their own backyard.

There should be a lot of people aged from 16 and upwards around the area who would be very handy to the brigade. Do the sums!

There are around four hundred and fifty properties in the area, three trucks and too few people to operate them.

Who is going to respond in the event of a fire in our district?

The State Government provides us with tremendous facilities and equipment. All we need is enough trained volunteers to respond in an emergency. Volunteering is a great way to give back to the community and can provide valuable experience, life skills and friendships.

The training provided through the Rural Fire Service is world class and nationally accredited. Volunteering for the brigade is not just about firefighting. There are many other ways residents can help such as; maintenance of vehicles, mowing, fund raising, community education and assisting in community events.

During the height of the fire season we also need people to assist with catering and communications Anyone interested in volunteering should contact:

Brigade President on 0262302436 or Secretary on 0414610429

Alternatively you might like to attend one of the brigade's regular meetings on the first and third Wednesday of every month or just call in to the shed and say hello. We're happy for people to just come along, stick their head in the door and see what we are all about.

We look forward to seeing you and having your support and participation.

Rod Roberts President