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MEDIA RELEASE

COAST GUARD CFA VOLUNTEERS CELEBRATE 10 YEARS OF SERVICE

CFA volunteers are traditionally seen fighting fires in the bush, but when there's smoke on the water Coast Guard CFA volunteers are there to keep the boating community safe.

Coast Guard volunteer brigades are celebrating 10 years of protecting Victoria's bays and waterways in association with the CFA, both on the water and supporting their CFA land-based counterparts.

Victoria's Coast Guard has been operational since 1961, and over the past 10 years volunteers have had the choice to train in marine firefighting. Most flotillas are now also CFA brigades, with volunteers trained and prepared to battle all water-based incidents.

The volunteers complete a marine firefighting course run by the CFA, primarily based on structural firefighting training but adapted to fit the marine environment.

Coast Guard Frankston Brigade has recently recognised several of its inaugural members with 10-year badges, Squadron Commodore Mark Bainbridge, Marcus Grinblat, Sheena Grinblat, Peter Swan, Jean Brake and Bryan Phelan. John Hall and Jim Teika also received 10-year awards but were not at the ceremony.

Volunteers from several flotillas have also received emergency service medals for the efforts during Black Saturday fires.

Coast Guard Frankston Brigade Captain Les Ingram said volunteers are called to a surprisingly diverse range of incidents, and it's getting busier every year.

Like the land-based CFA volunteers, the Coast Guard becomes busier as the weather gets warmer.

"Once the season starts and the fish start biting we can have the pager going off on a daily basis," Captain Ingram said.

The 100 per cent volunteer brigade covers all aspects of marine safety, including search and rescue, breakdowns, sinking boats, boat fires, missing swimmers and people knocked overboard.

The brigades carry fire pumps and ancillary equipment on their boats, which are about to be upgraded under a new government funding program.

If needed, the Coast Guard can take CFA members to marine fires and the trained Coast Guard volunteers can also add to the CFA's surge capacity and respond to major disasters on-land.

They also take part in training with land-based CFA crews.

Traditionally Coast Guard brigades have been predominantly male, but at Frankston a recent recruitment campaign led to six new female volunteers among 15 recruits.

The season will officially kick off with the blessing of the brigade's fleet on October 28

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