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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **SKYE FIREFIGHTERS AND COAST GUARD JOIN FOR TRAINING**

Skye Fire Brigade is forging stronger connections in the local community with a new training program reaching across agencies.

The 100 per cent volunteer brigade moved into a new fire station this year and has elected a new management team with a focus on building relationships in the community.

The brigade has also recruited its first female member, which it hopes will encourage more women to volunteer.

Last week the brigade hosted cross training with Coast Guard members, following similar joint exercises with SES volunteers.

New Captain Troy Wallace said Skye wanted to build on relationships with surrounding integrated fire brigades and with other agencies.

“We’re only a relatively small brigade with 32 members but our volunteers are well trained and equipped to manage anything that comes our way,” Mr Wallace said.

The brigade has experienced a 25 per cent growth in calls over the past four years and now responds to about 260 incidents a year in Melbourne’s outer south-eastern suburbs, along with supporting the CFA’s surge capacity across the state.

There is a new focus on communication and engagement.

“We work with and support the surrounding integrated fire brigades and wanted to build similar relationships with other agencies that we may come across at call-outs,” Mr Wallace said.

Training with Coast Guard members covered pump operations and burn over drill skills and a return training session with the Coast Guard is being arranged. “We want to learn what they do so if we need to help them we can; and vice-versa if they need to help us,” Mr Wallace said.

The CFA volunteers are also conducting joint training exercises with the local SES, which is moving into the brigade’s former fire station just two doors away from the new site.

Skye has welcomed five new brigade members, all aged in their 20s, who have recently completed their minimum skills training.

“We’ve had a surge of young people into the brigade, including Camille Pola, our first female member for almost a decade,” Mr Wallace said. “We hope this will inspire more women to join.”

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria CEO Andrew Ford said volunteers like those at Skye are essential to public safety and provide a professional service that is effective and affordable.

“Our dedicated volunteers are continuing a great Australian tradition that is well respected in our communities,” Mr Ford said.

Mr Ford said volunteers are part of the fabric of society and contribute to community resilience.

“Volunteers also make a big contribution to the CFA’s surge capacity,” he added.

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