

Brigade Information Paper

CFA's Driver Education and Endorsement Strategy
Providing Safer Drivers & Operators for all CFA vehicles



October 2013

BACKGROUND

In 2009, CFA developed a discussion paper titled "Driver Training and Endorsement Strategy". This document was widely distributed within CFA and comments received were summarised and provided valuable feedback to ensure that the future direction was representative from the drivers of CFA vehicles.

This Information Paper has been developed by VFBV to inform CFA volunteers of the pending determination by the Chief Officer to adopt the principles and recommendations of the overall Driver Education and Endorsement Strategy based on feedback from the earlier Discussion Paper.

RATIONALE

Driving CFA vehicles has proven to be a risk with many members losing their lives whilst driving or travelling in or on CFA vehicles. Since CFA's inception in 1945 there have been 24 vehicle incidents which have resulted in the death of a firefighter. This is more than double the number of fatal fire incidents (11), although there have been a number of fire incidents with multiple fatalities. Vehicle incidents are responsible for 25% of all firefighter fatalities. Currently, CFA has approximately 3500 vehicles on the road and average three significant vehicle incidents per year. Collision/incident statistics for the financial year 2009–2010 show there were 200 claims of more than \$500 made, of which 162 were "CFA at fault" incidents; both these statistics have increased at about 7% a year over the past four years. The total dollar cost to CFA last financial year was approximately \$825,000.

It is also important to realise that since 1991, CFA vehicles have been involved in collisions which have resulted in the death of five civilian drivers or passengers. Of these two were at fault to CFA drivers. CFA requires all drivers to have the appropriately endorsed Victorian drivers licence and also the endorsement of the brigade OIC to drive the vehicle.

However, there is no requirement to have completed any form of driver training either on or off-road, although a number of courses are offered.

While courses are currently offered, there is no co-ordinated organisational approach to the conduct of driver training at this time. The amount of training being conducted in a Region is driven by the perceived risk, available resources and funds. Consequently the emphasis and amount of driver training being undertaken across the state varies considerably from Region to Region.

Recent incidents involving CFA Tankers and the resultant investigations has highlighted the need for a consolidated review of all driver education and the OIC's endorsement process across the organisation.

For operational requirements, driving the vehicles to the fire-ground is the first stage. Depending upon the type and severity of fire or incident, operating the pump or aerial component is just as important. Within CFA, drivers of vehicles are also responsible for its safe operation. This includes the operation of the pump which can involve more training than driver education.

PROVIDING SAFER DRIVERS & OPERATORS FOR ALL CFA VEHICLES

This strategy proposes that CFA formally recognises the importance of driving and operating CFA vehicles by ensuring that the Chief Officer is able to meet his statutory obligations. Officer's delegated powers of the Chief Officer can only ensure that 'CFA is a community based fire and emergency service whose mission is to protect lives and property' if they have firefighting appliances crewed by competent drivers and operators.

This proposal will ensure that all drivers of CFA vehicles receive the appropriate training for the risks that are relevant to their position and role within CFA and that they have the required competency to recognise such skills and knowledge.

It also will ensure that when any fire-fighting appliance attends any call to support the community that competent operators can safely operate the appliance.

THE STRATEGY!

The strategy will be based upon a process involving four stages. These stages will be conducted according to funding being approved to meet agreed objectives.

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| Stage One | Development and approval of strategy |
| Stage Two | Confirmation of numbers to be trained and finalise learning and assessment materials |
| Stage Three | Infrastructure and course requirements |
| Stage Four | Deliver and review programs |

It is the intent of this strategy to apply to all CFA members, from the CEO down to the newest CFA member irrespective of being a volunteer member, career officer / firefighter, business services or administrative staff.

CFA will ensure that a standard and consistent approach to training and assessing is achieved for the safe operation of all CFA vehicles. The Strategy will outline the requirements of each CFA member and processes involved to ensure that they receive the appropriate training for their role within CFA. It will also ensure that all training, assessments and endorsements are appropriately recorded and recognised.

PRINCIPLES THAT UNDERPIN THE STRATEGY

The original discussion paper in 2009 explored **eight** issues for decision and these have helped form the principles that will underpin the strategy

- 1. Should CFA train both staff and volunteers to the same competency and to the same level?**

All drivers, Volunteers and Career Staff should be trained and assessed to the same competency. This competency should be to a level commensurate to local risks and environment.

- 2. Is it suitable to provide off-road driver training in RVs or should all training be in the similar vehicles to what the student will drive in their brigade?**

Where possible driver training should be delivered in like vehicles to what the student will be expected to drive in their home location. RV's can be used for the initial part of the training to develop skills and build confidence.

- 3. Should all drivers of CFA vehicles be required to hold an appropriate competency?**

All drivers of CFA vehicles will be required to gain the appropriate competency. All new CFA members and those identified existing members requiring the need will undertake and successfully complete an approved nationally recognised or CFA driving / operator course before being considered for endorsement by their relevant line manager or OIC.

4. **Is providing training and assessment of the off-road competency at two levels (CFA and national) appropriate or should all drivers be required to be competent for all risks?**

Provide training and assessment in accordance with approved CFA off road driving competency/s which will embrace all 10 national competency elements.

5. **Should all drivers with current competencies be confirmed as being qualified for the CFA competency only, not the national competency?**

All drivers with current competencies be confirmed as having the CFA (local) competency unless they are able to provide evidence that they have been trained and assessed against all 10 performance criteria of the national competency. Drivers holding CFA competency, will need to obtain the outstanding performance criteria of the national competency within a defined time period.

6. **Should there be a skills maintenance requirement for driving competencies?**

Skills maintenance will be required for driver training competencies. Evidence to support Skills Maintenance may include; fire reports, vehicle log books, weekly runs, annual skills maintenance days; and where possible training instructors going out to the brigades.

7. **If so what skills maintenance is required?**

Skills maintenance should be obtained within a 2 year period, preferably annually. For driving on-road, 1 year and for off road, 2 years. *(Further details later in this paper)*

8. **Should CFA develop a number of full or part off-road driver training facilities similar to Fiskville's across the state?**

Provide full off road driver education facilities similar to Fiskville, at all field training grounds, and where possible use natural features at local areas. A similar track and skid pan to DECA's at Shepparton, be planned for Fiskville for on road driver training.

By implementing all recommendations as detailed above, CFA's goal is that by 2024 all members will hold CFA or nationally recognised competencies giving them the skills to drive and / or operate CFA vehicles in a safe manner.

PROPOSAL – SPECIFICS

1.0 DRIVING INSTRUCTORS AND ASSESSORS

It is proposed to have various skill sets that will offer options for members to become instructors and / or assessors at levels appropriate for their skill and interests. CFA recognises and respects that not all members have the time available to achieve the highest level available. However; there are important roles to be played by all instructors who form part of a pool with varying skills mixes.

The proposed levels are –

Driving

- ❖ CFA Driver Educator
- ❖ CFA Driving Instructor Level One
- ❖ CFA Driving Instructor Level Two
- ❖ CFA Driving Instructor Level Three

Vehicle Operations

- ❖ CFA Pump Instructor Level One
- ❖ CFA Pump Instructor Level Two
- ❖ CFA Aerial Appliance Instructor Level One
- ❖ CFA Aerial Appliance Instructor Level Two
- ❖ CFA Specialist Appliance Instructor Level One
- ❖ CFA Specialist Appliance Instructor Level Two
- ❖ EWP Assessor

2.0 RECOGNITION OF CURRENT COMPETENCIES AND /OR PRIOR LEARNING

CFA has a formal process for the recognition of current competencies (RCC) or the recognition of prior learning (RPL). In accordance with these guidelines CFA members will be able to have existing external competencies considered for recognition or provide evidence to support prior learning both within and outside CFA. A matrix mapping all appropriate competencies provides clear direction of what will be recognised and the path to follow to gain the approved CFA competency.

3.0 SKILLS MAINTENANCE

CFA are proposing the introduction of skill maintenance requirements to all CFA driver competencies and endorsements as part of this Driver Education and Endorsement Strategy. The frequency and duration of demonstrated skills maintenance as part of the proposed Strategy are indicative at this stage and may be subject to change to deliver the desirable demonstration of retained skills and competencies for all drivers.

On Road

It is proposed that each endorsed on road driver will be required to provide evidence that they have driven in on road conditions for a minimum of four times per calendar year and have a combined driving time of more than 3 hours per calendar year.

Further, every four years, drivers will need to demonstrate current competency by undertaking a 30 minute driving evaluation in each endorsed vehicle.

Off Road

It is proposed that each driver will be required to provide evidence that they have driven each endorsed vehicle capable of being driven off road for a minimum of at least once per calendar year and have a combined driving time of more than one hour per calendar year.

Further, every four years, drivers will need to demonstrate current competency by undertaking a drive involving all props at an approved off road driving skills site.

Legislation Updates

It is proposed that each CFA driver will be required to undertake or attend a Legislation and Policy update every three years or earlier as requested by the State Driving Co-ordinator. This update will require the successful completion of the Legislation and Policy theory paper.

Recovery of Vehicles

Further the strategy proposes that every five years, drivers will need to demonstrate current competency by demonstrating vehicle recovery techniques involving all props at an approved off road driving skills site.

Vehicle Operations

As part of the strategy, CFA proposes that each operator will be required to provide evidence that they have operated each endorsed vehicle for a minimum of 2 times per

calendar year and have a combined operating time of more than 1 hour per calendar year. Every four years, operators will need to demonstrate current competency by demonstrating competency for all FGP's applicable for each endorsed vehicle.

Challenge Testing

Currently, there are approximately 12,000 members driving CFA vehicles without an approved competency. Many of these drivers have varying experience from their private lives, their employment and their community work within CFA. It is important that CFA recognises this experience and provides a pathway for members that will give them the opportunity to prove what skills and knowledge they currently have.

As part of the strategy, all CFA members will be given the opportunity to undertake a challenge test for the practical components of each appropriate Skills Pak.

4.0 MEMBER ENDORSEMENT PROCESS

In accordance with the Chief Officer Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's), Officers in Charge (OIC's) are required to endorse drivers for both emergency (code 1) and non – emergency driving (code 3).

As part of the strategy, to be considered for an OIC endorsement, drivers will need to obtain the relevant competency/s and qualification/s for each vehicle that they intend to drive and/or operate. These competencies and qualifications will be recorded on TRAIN. To assist the OIC, a driver's endorsement guideline will assist with this process. Once approved, this endorsement will be recorded on TRAIN and IMS as an endorsement.

It is proposed that the **first stage of the implementation** of this strategy will require all OIC's to formally endorse all drivers currently driving CFA vehicles. This interim endorsement will remain valid for a specified period to be determined. All drivers endorsed under this process will then be given the opportunity to obtain the required competency and vehicle qualifications.

5.0 VEHICLES

CFA will as part of this strategy seek to plan for and fund the provisioning of dedicated vehicles to enable driver education to proceed as per a plan.

One of the major challenges in this strategy is the provision of suitable vehicles for training purposes. As part of the development of the Strategy, a number of additional vehicles have been identified as being required to deliver training and conduct assessments for both volunteer and career personnel. These vehicles are required to deliver training and assessments for both driving and vehicle operations. Currently, Districts are required to source vehicles from Operations which has many logistical issues. This is always a major consideration during the Fire Danger Period when any operational requirement takes precedence over training requirements. Being self-sufficient will allow training to be programmed without the need to rely on Operations for vehicles.

6.0 FACILITIES

CFA will as part of this strategy seek to plan for and fund the provisioning of purpose designed facilities to enable driver education to proceed as per a plan.

In recent years, CFA driver education programs have been modified to introduce drivers to new vehicle technology. Work Safe have stated that all employers have a duty of care to ensure all drivers understand all components of the vehicle they drive and understand the safety systems installed in vehicles. The last 10 years has seen a dramatic increase in passive and active safety systems becoming available on base models vehicles being used within CFA. To demonstrate these safety systems, suitable locations are required to provide students an opportunity to experience and practice appropriate driving techniques required to ensure the maximum benefits are gained from these systems.

On Road

In addition to a proposed on-road driving complex at Fiskville, there is a need to plan and fund suitable training areas around the state to deliver some elements of the driver education program. These areas would need to be sealed sections of roadway at least 300 metres in length and 12 metres wide. Further research is required to identify possible areas that exist within regional cities.

Off Road

CFA is planning for the establishment of a number of off-road driver training sites around the state. In some locations, these facilities are currently being utilised to deliver driver education for off road driving in both Recreational Vehicles (RV) and Tankers. The concept plan is to deliver 10 identified skills required to ensure that CFA has a pool of drivers who can competently drive CFA vehicles in off road situations across the state.

7.0 COSTS

The introduction of a program as large as this proposal will involve additional funds to existing training budgets. This proposal will be seeking funding in three stages. The first stage is to develop and up-skill existing instructors and introduce new instructors into the pool of available resources. There will be an initial cost in providing a pool of instructors in each Region.

As funding is approved in future years, this strategy will support the concepts of employing dedicated driving instructors similar to those currently employed for structural and bushfire-fighting training. These positions, in addition to providing training can be used in a coordination and audit role to support the volunteer instructors.

The second stage will be to provide dedicated off road driving areas and also suitable vehicles to deliver the required training. There is preliminary work in progress in identifying available sites and scoping out the costs involved to construct these facilities to appropriate engineering standards.

The third stage is largely dependent upon additional funding becoming available to provide specialist appliances and also a driver education complex at Fiskville. Such a complex would be multi agency and opportunity exists for Government and agency funding to share costs amongst all users.

NEXT STEPS

Volunteers in all Brigades consider this information and actively discuss the impacts of CFA implementing this Driver Education and Endorsement Strategy.

1. The VFBV Secretariat will distribute this Information Paper to all CFA Brigades and District Councils during October 2013.
2. The VFBV Secretariat will brief the VFBV Board of the CFA's Driver Education and Endorsement Strategy at the November Board Meeting.
3. VFBV District Councils engage with their member Brigades during the period up to the 1st December 2013 at scheduled District Council meetings to ascertain the feedback and advice from volunteers.

NOTE: *Brigades please brief your District Council delegates after discussing the implications of this Driver Education and Endorsement Strategy amongst your members, so that your feedback is communicated properly.*

4. A detailed discussion and directions workshop will be conducted as part of the VFBV State Council meeting on Sunday 8th December 2013.
5. Following such State Council determination, the VFBV Secretariat will provide CFA with its position on the adoption and implementation of the Strategy.

Allan Monti
Executive Officer 14th October 2013