From the Chief Officer

Number 127 - 5 November 2014

Summer Fire Safety Key Messages

During Fire Action Week, 16-23 November, CFA brigades around the state will be opening their doors to their communities to talk about fire season preparedness. We encourage our members to share the following **key messages** with their communities.

- This summer we are expecting above average temperatures which will result in more hot, dry, windy days than usual. Bush and grass will be very dry and fires will start more easily and burn faster and with more intensity.
- You're at risk of fire this summer if you live near bush, grassland or coastal scrub. You need to understand your fire risk and know what to do.
- Talk to your family and friends about the fire risk where you live and make plans for what you'll do on a hot, dry, windy day.
- Leaving early is the safest option to protect yourself and your family.
- If the Fire Danger Rating is **Code Red**, **Extreme** or **Severe**, you're risking your life if you wait and see what happens. Leaving early is the safest option to protect yourself and your family.
- It's up to you to stay informed. Check the Fire Danger Rating for your area every day and act to protect yourself and your family by leaving early on hot, dry, windy days.
- Don't wait and see. Leaving late is risky, it means that a drive that normally takes a few minutes could take hours and you may not be able to get out at all.
- Don't rely on an official warning to leave. Bushfires can start quickly and threaten homes and lives within minutes.

A single document that outlines CFA's key messages has been created. You can access the messages through the template toolkit on Brigades Online or by clicking here.

Female PPC

Since 2012 CFA's female members have had access to specially designed bushfire Personal Protective Clothing (PPC). The design has different trousers and a better fitting coat. The braces have been removed and the new waist band is elastic and has a draw cord. The changes were introduced after evaluating feedback and targeted trialling. The introduction of this PPC was an important step in acknowledging the diversity at CFA. I remind all members of the availability of female PPC should they wish to take up this option in exchange for their existing ensemble. Enquiries in the first instance should be directed to District Offices.

Trial of Voluntary Grain Harvesting Guide

The Voluntary Grain Harvesting Guide is a trial program about fire risk management during harvest and is a joint initiative of the Victorian Farmers Federation and CFA and provides an objective measure for farmers and header operators to use to manage fire risk, reduce the incidence of preventable fires and to establish a common understanding about when harvesting should cease because conditions pose a significant risk. The Guide contains advocated practices (suspending harvesting when Grassfire Danger Index exceeds 35) and a range of recommended practices (including monitoring conditions, fuel breaks, farm firefighting units and seeking further information and advice. The intent of the guide is to balance and preserve the valuable work completed by those in the grain harvesting industries which has to occur during the warmer months and reduce the number of fire starts attributable to grain harvesting. The guide is being trialled in the Warracknabeal area over the 14/15 fire season. Post harvesting season a detailed review will be conducted on the efficacy of the guide. I thank the Victorian Farmers Federation for their leadership and the members of Warracknabeal and Ebenezer groups and the staff of D17 for embracing the trial.

"*a major advantage of this voluntary scheme is that it provides a straightforward, user-friendly, and objective way for growers to manage potential fire risk..*" *– VFF Grain President Brett Hosking*