

Sassafras-Ferny Creek Fire Brigade ... Volunteers serving the community

Getting ready together for another summer ...

It's warming up just a bit and the landscape is looking refreshed for the first time in years. Last summer (was there a summer last year?) was a welcome respite after the long years of drought. This year we seem to have moved into a more normal pattern ... better rains, lush growth ... the breaking of one cycle and the start of another.

The hard lessons of February 2009 are with us still. Some of the learnings have already found application; some are taking a little more time to bed down.

But the fundamentals remain unchanged.

We will have a bushfire danger period this summer and somewhere in Victoria a community will come under threat. The fire danger locally will be determined by the weather over the next few weeks. Safe to say at this stage, there will at least be no early start to the fire season here.

Do some preparation

It doesn't much matter whether or not you plan to be here when a bushfire comes or not. You must do some preparation around your home and property if you want it to survive. The more preparation you do, the greater the chances of survival for your home and those around yours.

Have a plan ... or two ... or three

It is important to know what you are going to do on days of high risk. Planning involves making decisions

Beware the grasslands!

CFA is warning that favourable growing conditions across Victoria means there is an above-average risk for grassfires for the 2011-12 fire season. Not such a problem for those who live in this part of the Dandenongs, but many of us travel for work or holidays around the State during the fire danger period.

Understanding grassfire risk

- Grassfires can spread quickly and are extremely dangerous
- Grassfires can travel up to 25 km per hour.
- Grass is a fine fuel and burns faster than forests
- Grassfires tend to be less intense than forest fires, but still generate enormous amounts of radiant heat
- Taller, drier grass burns more intensely
- A grassland area with dried-out brown or golden-coloured grass that is over 10cm high is a bushfire risk.

Protecting yourself from grassfires

- Grassfires can start quickly and spread rapidly, catching people off guard. Grassfires are very hot and can produce huge amounts of radiant heat that can kill anyone caught out in the open.
- The safest place to be is well away from the threat.

Shelter yourself from radiant heat by

- going inside a building that is well-prepared and defended

well ahead of the fire danger period about how you and your family will deal with a number of issues: precious things, pets and people. Having a clear vision about how you plan to act on danger days, what your "fallback" plan is if the first plan fails and how to detail and communicate this plan all entail some foresight and thinking.

We're here to help

There is plenty of information available about how to plan for living in the Dandenongs during the bushfire danger period. But there are no "quick fixes". No-one is going to do it for you. We're happy to share that responsibility with you by providing as much detailed information as we can.

What to do

Come and talk to us. Attend a community



meeting. Come to a bushfire planning workshop. Join (or start) a Community Fireguard group. Access information on the CFA or brigade websites. Phone the Victorian Bushfire Information Line. Use the CFA App on your mobile. Follow CFA on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Collect up and READ the information booklets and other material provided by the CFA and the State Government. Listen for and act upon warnings. Drop in at the fire station for a chat.

For more information:

www.cfa.vic.gov.au

www.sassafrascfa.org.au



- going inside a private or community fire shelter
- as a last resort, go to a Neighbourhood Safer Place (Place of Last Resort). If there is no such place, then a ploughed paddock, dam, swimming pool or other large water body may offer some protection from radiant heat. This does not include a water tank.

Cars offer very little protection from radiant heat. A car is unlikely to protect you from the radiant heat of a grassfire. However, it offers more protection than being caught on foot in the open. If you are in a car and become caught in a grassfire, do not get out and run.

Come along and learn some more!

This year, there is a range of community events and other ways to learn more about bushfire survival in this part of the world and beyond.

CFA Sunday

On *CFA Sunday*, 20 November 2011, our fire station will be open to the public, with community safety resources available and advice on hand from 10am until 3pm.

Community Meetings

There will be two *Fire Ready community meetings* in the brigade area this summer:

- Thursday 12 January, 2012 at 7.30pm - Fire Station, Clarkmont Rd, Sassafras
- Tuesday 17 January, 2012 at 7.30pm - Ferny Creek Primary School, School Rd, Ferny Creek

Information and Family Fun Day

The Sassafras-Ferny Creek, Kalorama-Mt Dandenong and Olinda fire brigades are combining to hold an *Information and Family Fun Day* at the Olinda Community Hall, cnr Olinda-Monbulk Rd and The Georgian on Sunday 15 January, 2012 from 10am to 4pm. Representatives from other emergency agencies will also be in attendance.

Vale...

Bill Burnett (1935-2011)

The brigade was saddened by the recent death of Bill Burnett, whose membership originally dates back to 1953. William Arthur Burnett, known to all as "Bill", played a significant role as a leader in the early years of the Sassafras-Ferny Creek brigade. He was instrumental in the acquisition and equipping of the brigade's first fire truck. Bill's family were among the pioneers of the district and Treweek Parade is named after his mother's side. Upon joining the Forestry Commission in the 1970s, Bill relinquished his brigade membership but a change of policy saw him rejoin the CFA in the 1990s. For his work as a ranger and firefighter with Parks Victoria, he was awarded the National Medal for service. The brigade honoured him with a Life Membership in 2005 and last August he was presented with a CFA service medal marking 40 years service. A quiet achiever, Bill devoted his life to working and farming in and later being a custodian of his beloved Dandenong Ranges. He will be missed by many in our community.



Carols on the Mountain

Preparations are well underway for Carols on the Mountain 2011! As in previous years, we're expecting a bumper turnout for this popular community event staged at the Ferny Creek Recreation Reserve. Carols on the Mountain will be held on Saturday, 10 December. So, dust off the vocal chords, practice the harmonies and test out the old faa, laa, laa, laas. For more information, contact carols@sassafrascfa.org.au

Captain Koala needs YOU!

When it comes to bushfire in the Dandenongs, you can make a lot of noise, you can wait for someone else to do something or you can make a difference!

To help ensure fire safety in our district, we need to maintain a committed and viable firefighting team.

Right now, your brigade has vacancies for men and women who wish to train and qualify as **operational firefighters**.

Operational firefighting is not for everyone. It means a significant commitment of time, especially for training. You will undergo a minimum probationary six-month period to ensure your skill levels are up to the task. Work on the fireground can be both difficult and dangerous.

The rewards, however, are enormous. The training alone will equip you with a range of skills, many of which translate directly into the paid workforce.

It's not just about bushfire, of course. The brigade attends a range of fires and incidents all year-round. Members are on call 365 days of the year, 24 hours a day.

So if you think you have what it takes and want to learn more, contact us (see our **contact details below**). For more information of volunteering with CFA, go to:

www.cfa.vic.gov.au/volunteerandcareer/volunteering/join.htm

**PREPARE.
ACT.
SURVIVE.**

Brigade & CFA contacts

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Fire Station (answering service): 9755 1078

E-mail: secretary@sassafrascfa.org.au

Brigade website: www.sassafrascfa.org.au

CFA Eastern Metropolitan Region HQ: 8739 1300

CFA Website: www.cfa.vic.gov.au

Victorian Bushfire Information Line: 1800 240 667