

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

An average summer? We still need to prepare ...

The predictions are for an “average” fire season in south-eastern Australia this summer. We know that in the Dandenongs so far this year we have enjoyed good rainfall, above average most months. We have had what long-term residents might describe as a “normal” winter.

What does this mean for summer? It means we go in to the fire danger period not on the back of a long drought, but on the back of a couple of years that have put a good deal of moisture back into the soil. That means it will take longer to dry out and that fires certainly won't have the immediate intensity they had, say in 2009.

It doesn't mean there is no risk of bushfire. That is always with us ... it only takes a few hot days to elevate the risk of ignition. That was the experience in 1997. It also means we can expect the fire danger period locally to be later in the summer, perhaps stretching into autumn.

Community Fire Refuge pilot

Ferny Creek Primary School is one of three sites in the Yarra Ranges selected for a Community Fire Refuge pilot. The provision of community fire refuges is one of the bushfire shelter options recommended by the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission. The brigade is committed to working with the Shire, the CFA, the Fire Services Commissioner and our own community to ensure a successful pilot and an

outcome that suits the local community. For more information about the pilot, www.firecommissioner.vic.gov.au

What should we do?

Whether or not you plan to be here when a bushfire comes, it pays to prepare for the worst. Preparation around your home and property will help yours and the neighbouring properties survive in the event of a fire survive.

There's always something new ...

Every season is different so even if you've attended a community meeting in previous years, it's important to attend one this year - local conditions, shelter options and emergency warning systems can all change from year to year.



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

We're here to help

For more information:

www.cfa.vic.gov.au

www.sassafrascfa.org.au

Have you used the free Home Bushfire Advice Service?

CFA's Home Bushfire Advice Service offers personalised, tailored advice delivered at your property by trained Fire Safety Officers.

We have brigade members trained to deliver a preliminary assessment on your property. If required, you can then be referred for a full assessment conducted by a CFA Fire Safety Officer.

Find out

- ◆ Your level of bushfire risk
- ◆ Fire hazards on your property and how to manage them
- ◆ How to develop a Bushfire Survival Plan so your family knows what to do on high risk fire days.

Receive one-on-one individual advice about

- ◆ Property maintenance to help lower your bushfire risk
- ◆ Property access
- ◆ Improving defendable space
- ◆ Vegetation management
- ◆ Water supply requirements
- ◆ Your personal capacity to cope with fire.

You'll also receive a confidential written report and peace of mind knowing how to make your home Fire Ready.

This service is free and offered year round.

Appointments take approximately one hour, depending on your requirements.

Am I living in a high bushfire risk area?

You can start your own self-assessment of bushfire risk by using the Online Household Bushfire Self Assessment Tool <http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/firesafety/bushfire/selfassessment/index.html>

Prepare your garden

Landscaping for bushfire is much the same as any type of gardening except there are a few more planning steps. It involves planning, designing, planting and managing the area around your house. Find out more about preparing your garden

<http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/firesafety/bushfire/prepare-your-property/prepare-garden.htm>

For more information contact us via email

captain@sassafrascfa.org.au or phone CFA District HQ

**PREPARE.
ACT.
SURVIVE.**

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

Come along on *CFA Sunday*, 25 November 2012. Our fire station will be open to the public, with community safety resources available and advice on hand from 10am until 1pm. Free sausage sizzle! Giveaways for the kids!

Community Meetings

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

- Monday 17 December, 2012 at 7.30pm
Fire Station, Clarkmont Rd, Sassafras
- Saturday 19 January, 2012 at 2pm
Fire Station, Clarkmont Rd, Sassafras

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 3 February, 2013 from 10am to 4pm. Representatives from other emergency agencies will also be in attendance.

Carols on the Mountain

Preparations are well underway for Carols on the Mountain 2012! 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, 15 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. Entry by gold coin donation.



I could never be a firefighter ...

By Sarah Krumins

Having lived through the Ferny Creek bushfires in January 1997, I had become scared stiff of fire. As the summers came and went I would be walking around the house constantly looking for smoke, smelling for smoke, living in constant fear. Some days I would even be in tears when I heard the local brigade's siren.

I remember saying after the 1997 fires that I could never be a firefighter. Then one day, a copy of *Firebreak* arrived in my letterbox asking for auxiliary members. I joined as an auxiliary member willing to make the brave firefighters meals and refreshments. The more I attended the brigade the more I became hooked. I did the fire ground safety course so I could deliver meals to firefighters on the fire ground and before I knew it I became operational.

My first operational experience came along when I rocked up to the brigade for training, as I had done for the past few months. The siren went off and I thought they were testing the siren. "Hurry up, get in," everyone was saying, and the next thing I knew we were out the door with lights and sirens, and my palms were sweating.

We were turning out to a grass and scrub fire in the national park. It was too late to tell them I couldn't do this and, being a typical woman, the thought crossed my mind that I should have gone to the toilet first.

Everyone was supportive and all the training I'd done was put into action. That turnout changed me. It was the point in my life when that arsonist hadn't got the better of me.

I have now been with the Sassafras-Ferny Creek brigade for five years. I'm secretary and fifth lieutenant of the brigade as well as head of the Dandenong Ranges Feeding Group.

I really encourage anyone who is living in fear in the bush to give their local brigade a go. The skills, friends and knowledge you gain are better than living in fear.

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Brigade & CFA contacts

John Schauble, Captain 9755 1402

Sarah Krumins, Secretary 9755 1981

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