

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

Bushfires? After all that rain? Surely not ...

So, what kind of summer will we have this year? Will there be bushfires? Will they be bad ones? These must be questions on everyone's minds.

What seemed like a long, wet winter was actually not that much above average. So will the Dandenongs reach the point where bushfire will be a problem or will it be one of those summers where not much happens?

Truth is, a wet year is not itself a barrier to an active fire season. Twenty years ago - on 21 January 1997 - our community suffered the cruelest of fates when a bushfire claimed the lives of three residents (Graham and Jennifer Lindroth and Genevieve Erin) in Seabreeze Avenue, Ferny Creek and more than 30 families lost their homes in an afternoon.

The 1997 fires were the last to have a direct and serious impact on our immediate community. Yet they occurred in the back of a fairly wet year. It took just a few dry weeks and a burst of intensely

hot, windy weather to shift from benign conditions into severe bushfire danger.

Another thing to remember is that the 1997 fires were not large. These were not fires on the scale of Black Saturday or Ash Wednesday. Of the five outbreaks in the Dandenongs that day, the single fire that did the most damage was less than 150 hectares in area - small even in terms of fires that have burned here in the past.

There are at least a handful of fires locally every year, mostly dealt with quickly and without impact on the broader community. Such is the nature of where we live that bushfire is a danger every year and to everyone who lives here.

That is not cause for panic. It is cause for preparation, planning and practice. We live in one of the most beautiful environments in Victoria. We need to enjoy it, celebrate it and respect it.

There are plenty of ways to learn more about fire in our local



environment and how to plan and prepare. So come along to the next community meeting or drop in at the brigade on Wednesday evening or Sunday morning.

www.cfa.vic.gov.au

www.emergency.vic.gov.au

www.sassafrascfa.org.au

<http://www.facebook.com/SassafrasFernyCreekFireBrigade>

A new way to learn about all emergencies

There's a new way to get the latest on all types of emergencies, including bushfires. Launched on 16 November, the new VicEmergency app replaces FireReady and brings together emergency information and warnings from all Victoria's emergency services, including CFA, MFB, SES, Life Saving Victoria, Department of Economic Development and Transport and Resources, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, and the Department of Health and Human Services.

Victorian communities can now access all emergency information and warnings through one, centralised point.

The new app can be accessed on most mobile phones and tablets and, like FireReady, it provides targeted



warnings and notifications for specific locations through 'watch zones'. Users can create up to 20 watch zones that are tailored to areas relevant for them.

Always use more than

one source of information and warnings this summer. This can include visiting the VicEmergency website, tuning into ABC local radio, calling the new VicEmergency Hotline (1800 226 226), or following CFA or VicEmergency on Facebook or Twitter.

For more information visit emergency.vic.gov.au

Come along and learn some more!

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

Community Meetings: *Are You Bushfire Ready?*

There are two community meetings scheduled in the brigade area this summer:

- Wednesday, 18 January 2016 at 7.30pm
Fire Station, Clarkmont Rd, Sassafras
- Saturday, 21 January 2016 at 2pm
Fire Station, Clarkmont Rd, Sassafras

Depending on conditions, additional meetings may be called as required.

Community Fireguard

Community Fireguard is a great way to learn about what you need to do to plan and prepare for a bushfire. If your group needs a kick start, or you want to start a new group in your area or link in with an existing group, contact our Brigade Community Safety Coordinator, Virginia McCallum on 0407 328 694 or email y.mccallum@cfa.vic.gov.au

I hear sirens ... what does that mean?

Fire sirens have long been part of life in the Hills. These days, the sirens are a back up alert for members, who also rely on pager messaging. But sirens play a very important role in alerting the community that "something's going on".

Our brigade sirens are normally tested on **Wednesday nights between 7.20pm and 7.30pm**.

Sirens are used all year round **whenever the brigade is called out to a fire or incident**. In those circumstances, the sound will last for no longer than **90 seconds**.

When the sirens sound continuously for **5 minutes**, it means there is a **Watch and Act** message or **Emergency Warning** in effect for this area. You need to find out more information and act upon it. In addition to the CFA sirens in Clarkmont Rd, Birds Rd and Hethersett Rd, there are three additional sirens in the One Tree Hill area that are activated only during the summer months as part of the Ferny Creek Bushfire Alert System. You may also hear sirens from neighbouring communities, such as Belgrave, Upwey, Kallista, Upper Ferntree Gully, Olinda and beyond.

Especially in summer, when you hear sirens, it is **NOT** a signal to evacuate. It is a signal to seek more information urgently

Briefly ... Briefly ... Briefly ...

Carols on the Mountain

Yep, they're on again ... Come and join the community for this annual celebration. As in previous years, we're expecting a bumper turnout at the Ferny Creek Recreation Reserve. Carols on the Mountain will be held on Saturday, 10 December. Gates open at 6pm. Entry by gold coin donation. Food, soft drinks, and glow stuff available. No alcohol please. So, dust off those vocal chords, practice the harmonies and test out the old faa, laa, laa, laas.

The Ferny Creek Community Fire Refuge

The Ferny Creek Primary School is one of four sites in Victoria that doubles as a Community Fire Refuge (the others at are East Warburton, Blackwood and Millgrove, with a fifth refuge under construction at Lavers Hill in the Otways).

The provision of community fire refuges is one of the bushfire shelter options recommended by the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission.

Here are some things you must know:

- The refuge is a place of last resort. It should never be your primary plan to go there during a bushfire emergency.
- It will best serve residents in the School Rd and One Tree Hill areas. Travelling to the refuge from further away will be risky during a fire.
- The refuge may not provide a greater level of safety than the location you are leaving.
- The refuge has a limited capacity.
- It is not a "drop in" centre. There will be no capacity for people to hang around the refuge on high-risk days. It will only be opened during an emergency.

For more information about refuges and other shelter options across Victoria, www.emv.vic.gov.au

AN Open Day will be held at the Ferny Creek Community Fire Refuge on 4 December from 1pm to 3pm.

Brigade & CFA contacts

John Schurink, Captain 9755 1872

Sarah Krumins, Secretary 9755 1981

Fire Station (answering service): 9755 1078

E-mail: secretary@sassafrascfa.org.au

CFA Region 13 HQ: 8739 1300

VicEmergency: www.emergency.vic.gov.au

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

Brigade website: www.sassafrascfa.org.au

Facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/SassafrasFernyCreekFireBrigade>

