

From: Office Of The Commissioner
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Subject: Commissioner's Corner 622



Commissioner's Corner

Current National Security Alert Level: **High**

Wednesday 30 September 2015
Number 622

[Read online via the intranet at here](#)

GENERAL

Bankstown unit fire coronial findings

On Friday 18 September, the Coronial Inquiry into the September 2012 fatal Bankstown unit fire concluded at Glebe Coroner's Court. During the inquiry, FRNSW Assistant Director Fire Safety, Chief Superintendent Greg Buckley gave evidence and submitted several recommendations for consideration, all of which were accepted by Magistrate Hugh Dillon. At a press conference that day I indicated that FRNSW fully supports the recommendations, and I hope to see changes that will help to prevent further lives from being lost.

Scientific and evidence-based research shows that sprinkler systems are by far the most reliable and proven measure to save lives and property from fire. With the changing nature of building designs and the increased speed of fire development due to modern furnishings, it is FRNSW's view that all apartment buildings, regardless of height, should be subject to increased safety measures. FRNSW will continue to work with local councils, fire safety regulators and the building industry and advocate for changes to be made to the national construction code. For more information and the full findings, see the [intranet story](#).

Developing leadership in emergency services

Last Friday I participated in a workshop where emergency services leaders in NSW and Victoria collaborated in designing a leadership program for mid-level managers and emerging leaders in

our organisations. The workshop, led by Nous, a leading management consulting and leadership development firm, focused on critical aspects such as people leadership, strategic thinking and project management – things that middle managers need to add to their operational skillsets. Following the workshop, Nous will partner with emergency services to develop and pilot a new leadership program. The final program will be offered to all emergency service agencies, tailored to meet the needs of each organisation.

Howies' fire truck hits the road in Cobar

It was with mixed feelings that on Tuesday 22 September I presented the crew at 256 Cobar with keys to a new \$310,000 Mercedes Benz Class 2 pumper with the number plate 'HOWIES' in a unique tribute to Retained Firefighter Daniel Howard. Howie's family were there for the handover and it was an emotional day for them and 256 crew. This is the first time in FRNSW history that a fire appliance has carried a personalised registration plate. When Zone Commander RW1, Superintendent Adam Dewberry came to me to request the personalised plate for the new Class 2 Pumper which was due for 256 Station, it seemed a fitting way to perpetuate the memory of RetF Howard. The number plate was kept a secret from the crew until it was unveiled. For more information, see the [intranet story](#).

Protecting your future

At the appliance handover in Cobar, I had the opportunity to talk at some length to the family of Daniel Howard. The family asked me to impress on all firefighters that firefighting is a dangerous profession and that you never know what the next call may be. Accidents can strike at any time as was brought home to all of us with the recent tragic death of firefighter Drew Cullen. The Howard family has requested that I also inform all firefighters of the importance of having a valid and active will as well as up to date emergency contact details in ESS. Wills can be arranged through the [NSW Trustee and Guardian](#), the [Fire Brigades Employees' Credit Union](#), the [FBEU](#) or any Solicitor. Please don't put it off. If you pass away and leave no will, dependents may not be able to access joint accounts or assets until tedious, often expensive and lengthy legal processes are finalised. None of us want this to happen to our loved ones.

FRNSW privacy training video released

We released a revised *Privacy Policy and Privacy Management Plan* earlier this year to address the management and protection of personal information at FRNSW. To further assist all firefighting and admin staff to understand what they need to do to comply with these requirements, our Governance and Legal Office has produced the following short [video presentation](#). The video highlights key information and facts about privacy that all staff should be aware of, including advice on how to deal with privacy queries from members of the public.

Play your part in servicing rescue equipment

Equipment Logistics at Greenacre (Rescue) is responsible for the annual servicing, maintenance, repair and replacement of rescue equipment at 359 locations across the State. To ensure the operation runs smoothly – and your equipment is correctly serviced – it is crucial that stations follow the service exchange process. When you receive your equipment (in the blue boxes), please exchange the listed items, and then return them as soon as possible. Following this simple process ensures that the exchange program stays on track so that every station throughout the State receives their equipment on schedule. See the [intranet story](#) for more information.

Compass Program promotes personal and professional development

FRNSW's Compass program is a five day personal and professional development program that focuses on individuals, their role with their teams and how this contributes to maximising their contribution to overall organisational performance. Presenters at our last program at the Institute of Police Management at Manly included Tony Stuart, CEO NRMA, and Mark Crossweller, Director General of Emergency Management Australia. This program builds on the work currently being done in the Station Officers and Captains programs. It is aimed at Duty Commanders, but is also suitable for Zone Commanders and admin and trades positions at these levels. Further information on the program and how to participate is being distributed via the commands.

Assisting staff wellbeing during Mental Health Month

October is Mental Health Month and it is aimed at making all of us more aware of how our work can impact on our mental health. While our work increases the risk of exposure to traumatic incidents, there are also many other challenging aspects to our roles. Over the past five years, FRNSW has shifted the focus of its mental health management to a more holistic approach to assist in preventing mental health issues, creating discussion and reducing the stigma associated with mental health as well as providing the necessary support when staff need help for both work-related and personal issues.

The shift to a more proactive approach to mental health means that our programs have moved from a focus on trauma to a broader whole of career/life approach. During Mental Health Month, look out for intranet stories that will discuss in detail our Critical Incident Support program, the SANE Mindful Employer program for supervisors, a mental health training program for managers designed by FRNSW and the Black Dog Institute, and a resilience program for all employees.

Firefighters make Fijian library a reality

Six FRNSW firefighters recently gave up their own time to help build a school library in the remote village of Vacalea on the island of Kadavu, Fiji. In August, Station Officer Peter Eastment and Senior Firefighters Andrew Verus, Paul O'Sullivan, Dan Clay, Greg Daly and Steven Richards spent a week in Fiji building the new school library from scratch, including installing electricity, glazing and smoke detectors and giving fire safety talks. SF Verus and his team are now working to turn the new building into a fully functioning library, complete with more than 3,000 donated books. I am sure that the time and exceptional effort put in by this dedicated team will greatly benefit the local community. Well done to all involved. For more information and to help the team raise money to complete the project, see the [intranet story](#).

Firies triumph in the 9/11 Memorial Cup

On Thursday 11 September, I attended as FRNSW Rugby Union Club players took to the field to compete against the NSW Police Force in the second 9/11 Memorial Cup. The tournament is dedicated to the thousands of people, including 343 firefighters and 72 police officers, who lost their lives in the terrorist attacks against the USA in September 2001. Both games were played in a spirit that honoured the memory of our NYPD and FDNY colleagues killed in the line of duty, strong on-field competition followed by an afternoon of camaraderie that epitomised our joint values of respect, courage and service. The final scores were: Women: FRNSW defeated Police 45-5; Men's Opens: Police defeated FRNSW 5-0; Men's over-35s: Police forfeited.

Raising funds for burns victims and medical research

On 18 September I attended the Newcastle Firefighters Ball along with 220 firefighters and their partners, families and friends. It was a great night which raised more than \$30,000 for the KIDS Foundation and the John Hunter Hospital Children's Hospital, bringing the total raised to date to more than \$433,000. Congratulations on a great effort.

After 10 years of the highly successful annual '400 in 4' ride between Wagga Wagga and Sydney, in 2016 FRNSW is joining with Queensland Fire & Emergency Services for a combined ride from Sydney to Brisbane, a distance of over 1000km, from 9-17 May. See the 24/9 email to all staff for details; email charity.ride@400in4.org for enquiries or to submit an expression of interest.

Also a final reminder that this coming long weekend, firefighters in full turnout gear will ascend Sydney Eye Tower to raise funds for motor neurone disease. Be quick if you want to participate; or if not, consider donating to support the more than 150 firefighters doing the climb. See previous Commissioner's Corner and intranet articles for details.

Interested in trekking the Kokoda Trail with Police Legacy?

The NSW Police Force is inviting expressions of interest from FRNSW personnel wanting to participate in the 2016 Police Legacy Kokoda Trek. The NSW emergency services contingent will present as part of the official ANZAC Day Dawn Service held at Bomana Cemetery and War Memorial in ceremonial uniform and lay wreaths on behalf of their respective organisations. Trekkers will be away 12 to 26 April and cost will be approximately \$5,000. FRNSW personnel interested in attending should contact Inspector Bob Mey by COB 9 October, preferably by email on robert.mey@fire.nsw.gov.au or ring 0414 798 788.

INCIDENTS

4th Alarm fire at Sydney's historic Central Railway Station

On Saturday 26 September multiple inner city crews responded to a high profile incident when it was feared that the historic Central Railway Station building in Haymarket would be engulfed by a quickly developing fire in the concourse area. Shortly before 1800hrs, the City of Sydney Flyer and Runner were responded to initial reports that a fire had broken out in the Hungry Jack's restaurant within the concourse area opposite Platform 6. Due to the number of calls received, the Ladder Platform and the Rescue Pumper were added to the response together with the State Rail Fire Service.

Initially arriving crews reported that the fire was quickly spreading through the extensive flue system above the main kitchen area and threatening multiple levels above. The Duty Commander was quickly on scene and immediately called for a 4th Alarm response. Over 1,000 commuters and tourists were evacuated from the restaurant and concourse area. Platforms 1-15 were closed down, trains were stopped and the city light rail was also brought to a standstill to enable fire crews to access the quickly developing blaze. Thousands of onlookers around the iconic building looked on as large volumes of smoke and flames were seen issuing from several windows above the concourse area.

An offensive strategy was immediately adopted as it was feared the fire would spread from the ducting into upper levels. Three crews in SCBA successfully brought the developing fire quickly under control while the ladder platform was used to check for any fire extension. It took attending crews just over an hour to contain the fire and final extinguishment was reported at 1914hrs. Ventilation and salvage work continued for several more hours, however trains were allowed to return to service at 1953hrs while light rail services resumed at 2005hrs. Upper levels of the building were used as the State Rail Control Centre and functions were quickly transferred to the State Rail Disaster recovery site at Belmore. A fire duty was maintained throughout the night and the site was handed over to State Rail on Sunday morning.

Despite the mass evacuation, only one elderly woman required treatment for smoke inhalation and was released by paramedics without requiring hospitalisation. The Hungry Jack's restaurant

sustained substantial damage with the main concourse areas affected by smoke.

I attended the fire but by the time I arrived great work by crews and the incident management team had brought the situation under control. Congratulations to all attending crews for their rapid response and successful attack strategies which undoubtedly saved one of Sydney's iconic landmarks. Although there were severe disruptions to Sydney's rail services, the good work by all attending crews and officers meant that normal rail services were able to be quickly resumed. Initial responding crews were from 01 City of Sydney, 03 The Rocks, 04 Darlinghurst, 05 Newtown, 10 Redfern, 11 Woollahra, 13 Alexandria, 18 Glebe, 36 Crows Nest, 85 Chester Hill and 38 Pyrmont.

3rd Alarm fire at Lidcombe

While crews were still mopping up at the Central Railway Station fire earlier in the night, 30 Lidcombe and 62 Bankstown were responded at 0258hrs on Sunday 27 September to reports from Police that fire had taken hold of premises above a hair salon in Joseph Street, Lidcombe, directly opposite the railway station.

When crews arrived they were confronted with a two-level row of shops with residences above. A 3rd Alarm was called for as flames were reported coming from the roof of the second floor. A defensive strategy was initially employed to prevent lateral spread to residences on either side. A number of residents were safely evacuated as an aerial attack was commenced from Sector A.

Although the premises where the fire started were extensively damaged, fire crews with SCBA and hand lines were able to contain the fire, preventing further spread and bringing it under control in less than an hour. Further investigation revealed that the premises were unoccupied and used as a massage business during the daytime. Fire investigators from FIRU attended in the early hours of the morning and determined that the cause of the fire was most likely accidental. The building sustained extensive structural damage and engineers have been called to provide further assessment of the buildings safety. A number of businesses on the ground floor including a bakery, optometrist and a hair salon sustained smoke and water damage.

Congratulations to all crews for quickly containing the fire to the area of origin and saving multiple businesses from total destruction. Crews attending were from 30 Lidcombe, 62 Bankstown, 55 Guildford, 85 Chester Hill, 16 Concord, 27 Parramatta, 19 Silverwater, 15 Burwood, 13 Alexandria and 59 Eastwood.

ASK THE COMMISSIONER

It has been some time since the requirements for questions submitted for a response have been

published. They are as follows:

- Emails should be sent to Ask the Commissioner (OfficeOfTheCommissioner@fire.nsw.gov.au)
- Questions topics should be about organisational, not personal issues.
- Submissions must come from a valid Fire & Rescue NSW email account.
- Anonymous submissions or submissions from non FRNSW accounts will not be answered.
- Malicious questions or questions designed to "attack" individuals will not be answered.
- Messages that are clearly untrue and where the sender is likely to be aware of this, particularly messages that may cause harm or seem intended to cause harm to others, will be referred to the Workplace Standards Branch. Disciplinary action may result.

Q: Has anyone or is anyone going to look at updating "firies friend"?

The new rosters (10/14 and 24 being the two main ones) and also the new annual leave system need updating. At the moment trying to plan ahead for holidays and breaks and the like is near impossible beyond the calendar released by the credit union.

A: A new Furies Friend came out just after the 24 hour roster and leave group changes. IT performed an auto-update on PCs but some may have missed out. Call the help desk if Furies Friend doesn't show the 24 hour platoons

Q: There seems to be a lack of skills maintenance for retained firefighters these days. I have checked the training calendar and, apart from Phase 1 & 2 training, there appears to be nothing available (at least in my zone). Has skills maintenance been put on the back burner for some reason?

A: Skills maintenance for retained firefighters is part of the Zone Based Training Program, this includes;

- Regular station drills (2 per month)
- Debriefs following incidents
- Training programs including refreshers, delivered by Senior Instructors, these are determined in consultation with Zone Management
- Structured programs such as BLS and BA semi visits (covering a range of skills refreshers inc, SCBA, Search & Rescue, atmospheric monitoring, and hazmat. Confined space is being added in 2015)
- E-learning resources available on-line for a range of topics, including electrical hazards, Incident Management, fire dynamics, hazmat, etc

Recent regional programs include, Working Safely at Heights, Gas detector rollout (incorporating training in the new detector and calibration station), Incident Management Training and SRB Rescue compliance program. The helmet roll out has also commenced which includes an SCBA refresher.

Please speak in the first instance to your Station Commander if you have concerns, and if necessary he or she will then speak to the Duty and Zone Commander about scheduling additional training.

CONTACT

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To contribute a story, please contact the Media and Communications Unit: 9265 2907.