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Current National Security Alert Level: **High**

GENERAL

Retained to Permanent Recruit Graduation

Yesterday the first class of former retained firefighters to complete the revised six week recruit course graduated to become permanent firefighters at the State Training College at Alexandria. The 20 graduates were selected from within FRNSW's retained firefighter ranks following the announcement last November of funding for an additional 40 permanent firefighter positions. It was a pleasure to welcome these already seasoned firefighters to the full-time ranks. The new recruits will join crews across greater Sydney, with about half the graduates taking up positions in fire stations in Sydney's west. A number of Primary rescue operators have gone directly to rescue stations. For more information, see the [intranet story](#).

Official opening of Picton Fire Station

The crew of 421 Picton were very pleased on Tuesday 24 February to host the Minister for Police and Emergency Services Stuart Ayres, Member for Wollondilly Jai Rowell, the Mayor of Wollondilly and I to officially open the new \$2.35 million fire station. The new station is more centrally located in relation to Picton, Bargo and Tahmoor, and is a modern, well-equipped base. For more information, see the [intranet story](#).

State-of-the-art USAR prop launched

Also on Tuesday 24 February, I joined our Minister to launch the new state-of-the-art USAR facility at the Disaster Training and Response Centre at Ingleburn. The custom-built training site, made possible thanks to a commitment of \$400,000 from the NSW Government, includes a derailed underground train, crushed cars, a lift shaft and collapsed building props. The facility will enable FRNSW to conduct ongoing skills maintenance training for Category 2 USAR operators, and to conduct courses to train new operators. In conjunction with the USAR prop launch, five new search kits, comprising a remote control camera and seismic and acoustic sensors, are also being rolled out to key heavy rescue stations across NSW. Three have already been installed at No. 1 City of Sydney, 59 Eastwood and 8 Liverpool. For more information, see the [intranet story](#).

New multipurpose helmets announced

While at last Tuesday's USAR prop launch, Minister Ayres also announced that new general purpose helmets (for bushfires, rescue, storm damage etc) are to be issued to every firefighter in NSW. This has been made possible by strong bargaining by our procurement team, resulting in sufficient savings to replace both structural and GP helmets. It is planned to issue the new Pacific R6C GP helmets together with the new 'jet-style' structural firefighting helmets, with rollout of both due to commence in March. For more information, see the [intranet story](#).

Trials of 24 hour shifts

The flexibility in rostering negotiated with the FBEU as part of the permanent firefighters' Award is being welcomed by many officers and firefighters, particularly through trials of 24 hour shifts and more flexible part change of shift arrangements. As most would be aware, 24 hour shifts are worked extensively throughout the

USA and Canada. I experienced these personally in 1995 when I worked for some weeks with Oakland, Los Angeles City, and Los Angeles County Fire Departments. As I have advised previously, any move toward 24 hour shifts becoming the "norm" will only happen if the FBEU seeks it and advises that there is a majority view that this should take place. There will need to be extensive consultation and identification of pros and cons. I wish to thank Duty and Zone Commanders in particular who are facilitating the trials that are taking place. The trials have entailed a great deal of extra work, particularly for Duty Commanders. It is essential that we gather information about experiences, positive and negative, so that these can be analysed jointly by management and the FBEU. Already issues have arisen such as tracking people to deliver essential training, and the strong feedback that commencing a 24 hour shift at 1800 can make fatigue difficult to manage. This last issue was identified long ago in the USA, and given this and the strong local feedback, unless there are compelling reasons for a "one off", such shifts are unlikely to be approved. One of the interesting outcomes thus far is lower absenteeism. This is a positive, as like all NSW Government agencies we are still required to deliver on our labour expense cap requirements and meet budget.

Celebrating International Women's Day and 30 years of women in firefighting

Annually on 8 March, thousands of events are held around the world to inspire women and celebrate their achievements for International Women's Day. This year's theme 'Make it Happen' couldn't be more apt for FRNSW as we not only mark 30 years of women in firefighting in FRNSW, but also start to seriously rethink the ways in which we recruit to ensure equality and diversity in our workplace. With our NSW Police colleagues celebrating 100 years of women in the Force in comparison, there's no doubt we do still have a way to go. It is very important to me to ensure that as a service we truly represent the makeup of the communities we serve and protect, and that we build on the continued success of the first women who joined a very different NSW Fire Brigades back in 1985.

We will mark International Women's Day with a presentation by Leanne Close, Deputy Commissioner Operations Australian Federal Police at 2pm on Wednesday 11 March in the Sweatman Room at City of Sydney Fire Station.

FIRU smoke alarm research burns

This week the Fire Investigation and Research Unit (FIRU) will undertake an extensive program of research burns at Londonderry. The burns, conducted in a furnished full-scale replica two bedroom unit, will analyse different types of smoke alarms and their effectiveness in providing early notification to occupants to allow safe egress. In a first for FRNSW, these research burns will also include the use of specialist gas sampling equipment. The findings of this research will be used to support FRNSW's efforts to improve fire safety in the built environment. FIRU has asked that I thank the many units and branches across FRNSW who have assisted with preparations for this important research. For more information, see the [intranet story](#).

NSW Governor launches Rotary NSW Emergency Services Community Awards

New State-wide awards, encompassing all six NSW Emergency Service Organisations were launched today at Government House, Sydney by the Governor of NSW, General David Hurley AC DSC. The Rotary NSW Emergency Services Community Awards, an initiative of the Rotary Clubs of NSW, seek to acknowledge emergency services personnel for community service above and beyond the call of normal duty. The concept originated in Wollongong with the annual "Pride of the Illawarra" Rotary Awards.

Emergency service personnel will be nominated by colleagues or members of the community with a panel of independent judges called on to assess nominees. Nominations close on 6 May, with finalists from each service announced ahead of the Gala Awards Ceremony in August. For more information, visit www.RotaryESCawards.org.au or see the [intranet story](#).

Insp Kernin Lambert presented with Certificate of Appreciation

On Wednesday 18 February, Inspector Kernin Lambert was disgruntled to say the least when was pulled away from his role as Incident Controller at a 2nd Alarm structure fire at Ashfield and sent to 49 Stn Cabramatta. He had no idea why this had occurred. On arrival he was surprised to see his family alongside Chief Superintendent Rick Griffiths, Area Commander MW and the local media – and even more surprised and humbled when he was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation for going above and beyond the call of duty

at a house fire at Mt Pritchard on 11 September 2014. The occupants of the house, which was completely destroyed, wrote to me to express their thanks to FRNSW, and Insp Lambert in particular, for the assistance and compassion they experienced at the fire and afterwards. Although Insp Lambert insists he was just doing his job, this is an exceptional example of the commitment and dedication shown by FRNSW firefighters. Congratulations Kernin! For more information, see the [intranet story](#).

Seniors Week

Seniors Week (14–22 March) provides an excellent opportunity to promote the 'Change Your Clock, Change Your Smoke Alarm Battery' campaign. This is also an ideal time to tap into the partnership between FRNSW and the RSL and Services Clubs Association of NSW, established in October last year, to communicate important fire safety messages to local at-risk communities. As part of the campaign, Duracell has provided FRNSW with 11,000 9V alkaline batteries. These can be used by fire stations for the SABRE program and at various community events in areas identified as high fire risk. I encourage you to get involved with the campaign and maximise the RSL Clubs Partnership during Seniors Week and beyond. For more information, see the [intranet story](#).

Roll out of new Class B foam completed

All previous Class B foam concentrates in use with FRNSW have now been replaced with fluorine free Solberg RF3x6 Class B foam concentrate. FRNSW Fleet staff have drained the foam tanks on appliances, replaced the alloy foam couplings with new gunmetal couplings, refilled the foam tanks with Solberg RF3x6 and collected the remaining stocks of all previous foam concentrates. Protein foam concentrate, 3M Aqueous Film Forming Foam (AFFF), 3M Alcohol Type Concentrate (ATC), Tridol and Niagara have now all been withdrawn from service and should not be used. There is no reason for stations to maintain any stock of these products. For more information, see the [intranet story](#).

The Firefighters Ball is back

Now is the time to send your best suit or cocktail dress to the dry cleaners to ensure you're ready for the FRNSW Annual Ball on Friday 15 May 2015. This year's event will be held at Dockside, Balcony Level, Cockle Bay Wharf, Darling Harbour from 6.30pm. Tickets cost \$125 per person and include a three-course meal, beer, wine, soft drinks, silent auctions, lucky door prizes and entertainment. To book yourself in or a table of up to 12, email your details to BallCommittee@fire.nsw.gov.au, with payment due by 27 March. All funds raised on the night will go directly to the Westmead Children's Hospital Burns Unit.

INCIDENTS

3rd Alarm unit fire Glebe

On Saturday 21 February, a fire in a unit at Catherine Street, Glebe saw a 3rd Alarm response by firefighters from Glebe, Newtown, Leichhardt, Redfern, Alexandria and City of Sydney just after 1800 hrs. The fire started in the lounge room of a second level unit of a two-storey complex which contained six units. There were a number of 000 phone calls after a smoke alarm at the complex alerted neighbours. S/O Peter Farquharson from 18 Glebe B Platoon was the first arriving officer and transmitted a red message for a 3rd Alarm when flames were seen issuing from the unit block which was of unknown depth. There were also a number of people unable to evacuate adjacent units due to smoke and fire impact.

The crew from 18 deployed a portable ladder to rescue two people from a balcony of the unit next door while other firefighters mounted an offensive internal attack so that a thorough search and rescue could be carried out. A man was rescued from the unit that was on fire by his neighbour who heard the smoke alarm and people yelling in the street. The neighbour made his way to the second level via the smoke logged stairway, gained entry to the unit through the front door and immediately located the occupant unconscious on a bed in the lounge room of the premises. He dragged the occupant, a man in his 60s, from the building and carried him downstairs to clear air where ambulance paramedics treated him for smoke inhalation. The neighbour also suffered smoke inhalation whilst performing the rescue and both men were transported to hospital for treatment.

The fire had extended into the ceiling and the roof space and threatened to spread to the entire unit block. Firefighters, with the assistance of a thermal imaging camera, were able to stop the fire from spreading through the roof space and extinguished it relatively quickly.

The whole unit was severely damaged by fire with remaining units and corridors of the complex suffering some fire damage along with heat and smoke damage. The occupant of the unit suffered severe burns to his legs and smoke inhalation. FIRU Investigators attended the scene and believe that the fire had been accidentally started by a discarded cigarette. This incident clearly indicates that had there not been a working smoke alarm in the premises and had his neighbour not acted in such a courageous manner, the occupant would have lost his life in this fire.

A great team effort by crews from 18 Glebe, 5 Newtown, 22 Leichhardt, 10 Redfern, 13 Alexandria, 17 Drummoyne and 1 City of Sydney led by Inspectors Kernin Lambert and Gary Meagher.

First day of autumn brings damaging storms

The first day of autumn, Sunday 1 March, provided a clear reminder that the storm season is still with us. The first of many calls was received at around 1518 hrs to reports of wires arcing in the Camden area. A large storm cell was sweeping up from the Illawarra and impacted throughout the afternoon across the metropolitan areas and finally contracted towards the Central Coast and Hunter area. FRNSW crews responded to approximately 70 wind and electrical storm related incidents providing assistance to the SES who responded to around 250 similar incidents.

FRNSW crews across Sydney were called out to many reports of power lines down and trees brought down by wind gusts of up to 100kph sweeping across the affected regions. The centre of the CBD did not escape as crews were called at 1657 hrs to reports of a lightning strike to the roof of a building in George Street, The Rocks. The strike dislodged a number of tiles and bricks and smoke was issuing from the roof area when crews arrived. All traces of fire and smouldering were quickly extinguished and the roof made safe. Just 30 minutes later, City of Sydney and Pyrmont crews were called to the Mirramar Apartments in Pitt Street as a balcony window on the 36th level became dislodged by high winds and threatened to fall onto the roadway below. Firefighters applied some basic building skills and were able to pop rivet the window back into place and secure it from further damage.

Crews also responded to loose roofing on Parramatta Road at Camperdown while northern suburbs crews were called to several trees down including a large branch down into the living room of a house in Wahroonga.

Most callouts occurred throughout the late afternoon with incident notifications reducing at around 2000 hrs as the storm cells abated.

ASK THE COMMISSIONER

Q. Is there any chance of non rescue trained firefighters going down to Perisher Fire Station when it is required to be manned permanently?

I understand the need for rescue capabilities, but I think it sounds like a great experience, and one that should not be strictly limited to those who are rescue trained.

A. Due to the location and isolation of the station at Perisher, it is desirable to have all the firefighters at that location during the winter period rescue qualified, as rescue is one of the core roles of that station.

Q. Sir, can you explain why some recruits from the targeted recruitment campaign are graduating from college with primary rescue qualification when (a) in 'normal' recruitment campaigns, ex-retained firefighters who held a primary rescue qualification were unable to gain their rescue qualification within the permanent ranks until they are QF and passed the PROP and (b) the criteria to participate in the PROP states 'firefighters must meet minimum requirements before being considered for primary rescue training:

A. You have raised a very good question, and you are correct, historically FRNSW has considered Retained Firefighters who gained a position as a Permanent Firefighter as "starting new". The recent class has resulted in FRNSW recognising the important skills and attributes that Retained Firefighters have already acquired and

how the recognition of those skills can be transitioned into their new career without having to "jump through all the hoops" again. If you were a former Retained Firefighter who held Primary rescue accreditation and want to be considered for transfer to a rescue station, please advise your Zone Commanders through the chain of command, together with details of when and where.

Q: There is a rumour that you are about to retire. Is this true?

A: No. I still love what I do.

Commissioner's email: Commissioner@fire.nsw.gov.au

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