

Colinton Courier

Newsletter of the Colinton Rural Fire Brigade * No 165* August 2015



Is it a bird? Is it a plane? Jeremy in Boise

Committee 2015-2016:

Fire Captain: Graham Povey
Senior Deputy: Nick Goldie
Deputies: Bob Morison, Jeremy Mears, Michael Burton, Barry Woolacott
President: Michael Burton
Secretary: Sandra Lauer
Treasurer: Bob Morison
Training Officer: Jeremy Mears
Equipment Officers: Michael Burton, Karl Higgins
Community Awareness: Nick Goldie, Eliška Donaldson
Fundraising: Gill Robinson
Permits: Graham Povey

NSW RFSA Delegate: Jeremy Mears



GET READY WEEKEND – GET INVOLVED!

If there were a fire emergency how prepared would you be?
Can fire trucks access your property?
Does everyone in your household know your emergency plan?
Have you considered your livestock and pets?

We didn't have many fires locally last bushfire season. **The forecast for this bushfire season is DRY and HOT.** We expect there will be more fires in our area during the summer months.

NOW is the time to prepare your plan.

On the **12th and 13th of September** volunteer members of Colinton Rural Fire Brigade will be visiting properties in our area to discuss:

- your Bushfire Survival Plan
- Asset Protection Zones (APZs)
 - your water supply
- access for emergency vehicles to your property.

Sessions of up to an hour are available. To schedule a time for brigade volunteers to visit your property contact

Eliška Donaldson

on 0438 850 313 or

colinton@monarorfs.org.au.

Take the time to GET READY for the bushfire season.

To download a Bushfire Survival Plan, visit www.rfs.nsw.gov.au.



Call out:

In the evening on *Sunday 9 August*, there was a call for crews to attend a grass fire south of Bredbo which was threatening houses. Cooma and Bredbo tankers were in attendance, but had asked for assistance.

Seven *Alpha* (Rowan, Nick) left from Baroona Road, where Michael B and Karl were also available, and *Bravo* (Graham, Barry) from Colinton, but Colinton crews were stood down almost immediately. ↪

Training:

The Colinton Brigade conducts training every month on the second Saturday, at 2.00 pm at the Station at Colinton. Everyone is welcome.

If possible, crews are asked to arrive at 1330 (1.30 pm) to check the trucks before training. ↪

Who's a firefighter in NSW?

There's a fire, and of course you come to the aid of your local brigade, even though you are not a member. If you are injured, who is liable? Can you call yourself a firefighter?

A very interesting article by Michael Eburn of the ANU, on the website *Australian Emergency Law*, discusses the definition in law of a "firefighter", and the legal consequences.

Professor Eburn specialises in curly questions about emergency services and emergency situations. The answers may surprise you.

See: <https://emergencylaw.wordpress.com/2015/07/19/who-is-a-volunteer-firefighter-in-nsw/> ↪

Winter Fire in the Blueys:

An early warning came in the first week of August as a major bushfire was driven by strong winds at Wentworth Falls in the Blue Mountains.

Close to 600 ha was burned, with several hundred firefighters protecting property, with no houses reported lost. Only two weeks ago, the area was under snow. ↪

Global Fire Warning:

Wildfires are growing wilder, because the weather is getting hotter, drier and windier, according to a global study of the danger signs for forest and grassland fires.

There is "a global trend" towards conditions being ripe for wildfires, says David Bowman of the University of Tasmania.

The study compared daily weather data since 1979 with standard climate indices of the risk of a wildfire, to compile a map of the length of fire seasons in forests, grassland and bush.

It found that the fire seasons are significantly longer today in a quarter of the planet covered in vegetation.

And there has been a doubling in burnable areas that are now affected by those long fire seasons.

The biggest increase has been in tropical savannah grasslands. All that is required to start a fire is a struck match or a lightning strike.

Not surprisingly, the result has been more wildfires in many parts of the world. The data on actual fires is fuzzy, but today, on average, an estimated 350 million hectares burn each year, an area around the size of India.

Standout events include the fires during the heatwaves in Russia in 2010 and in the US in 2012.

This year already both Alaska and Canada have experienced above average wildfires.

Bowman blames these huge wildfires currently raging in North America, on an early start to what looks like it will be a long fire season.

See:

<http://www.nature.com/ncomms/2015/150714/ncomms8537/full/ncomms8537.html>



Items for **The Colinton Courier** to Nick Goldie at nickgoldie@bigpond.com
02 6235 9190
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Rent-a-goat:

Renting Goats is the provocative title of a presentation by Sandra and Jeremy, planned to be delivered to the RFS Support Group in Cooma in the near future.

We reported on Sandra and Jeremy's visit to Boise, Idaho, in the June and July *Couriers*.

On *Saturday 25 July*, a group of Colinton members had a BYO supper at the station and heard Sandra and Jeremy do a practice run of their presentation.

Although there was some scepticism about the efficacy of goats on the Monaro, it's certainly an approach worth thinking about for properties with flammable bush close to buildings, especially in areas where tractors and slashers have difficult access.

Especially interesting was Jeremy's account of building codes in the mountainous areas of the US West, and the tendency of residents to build MacMansions, cheek by jowl, in semi-rural "developments" - along skylines.

It gives a great view of the approaching fire.



Visit to Smiths Road Brigade: (from Noreen Clark)

Colinton Call-out Officer Noreen Clark was warmly welcomed by the Smiths Road RFB on *Saturday 8 August*.

Smiths Road is in the process of revising its call-out procedures and was interested in investigating the procedures that Noreen had developed and implemented for Colinton RFB.

Noreen emphasised the basic principles underlying the Colinton call-out procedures:

- Immediate response to fire call.
- Involvement of all brigade members qualified at BF or higher training level.
- Flexibility - can be scaled up or scaled down according to how a fire develops - from minor local events to campaign fires

- Historical record - record the history of an event to assist brigade captain in preparing incident reports, to assist debriefs, and to supplement accident reports - particularly when these result in injury or (worse) fatality.

The Smiths Road executive identified elements of the Colinton procedures that might usefully be introduced in its revised procedures. For her part, Noreen hopes for feed back from Smiths Road, particularly as this may point to improvements to Colinton's procedures.



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Essential numbers
Emergency 000

Fire:
Cooma Monaro Fire Control
(24 hrs)
1 300 722 164
02-6455 0455

Fire:
Captain and Permit Officer:
Graham Povey
02-6454 4150
0419 406 908

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California Fires:
(adapted from a Reuters report)

The tally of property losses from California's most destructive wildfire this year nearly doubled this week as a blaze raged through dry scrubland north of Napa Valley wine country.

And an ominous U.S. Forest Service report stated that more than half its total

budget is, for the first time, being spent on fire suppression across the country.

Rising expenditures reflect an extraordinary wildfire season experienced this summer in California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Alaska - in the midst of a widespread and prolonged drought. Cal Fire crews have responded to more than 4,200 wildfires large and small so far this year, about 1,500 more than average.

The fiercest of some two dozen large blazes currently raging across state is the so-called Rocky Fire, which has burned more than 68,000 acres since July 29, in the foothills and canyons east of the town of Clearlake, about 110 miles north of San Francisco.

The fire has so far destroyed 91 structures to - 39 homes and 52 outbuildings - up from the 50 structures previously counted as destroyed, Cal Fire reported on Wednesday. Property losses may climb higher as damage-assessment teams reach more recently burned areas.

Nearly 7,000 structures, mostly dwellings, remained listed as threatened, with some 13,000 people placed under evacuation orders or advised to leave their homes. Portions of two major state highways in the area are closed.

Nearly 3500 firefighters were assigned to the Rocky Fire as of Wednesday, representing more than a third of the 10,000-plus firefighters on front lines statewide.

Rocky Fire crews were backed by more than 60 bulldozers, plus a squadron of 19 water-dropping helicopters and four airplane tankers attacking the flames from the air.

.Fire seasons today are 78 days longer than they were during the 1970s, and at least 10 states have experienced their largest fires on record since 2000, the agency said.

