

# Colinton Courier

Newsletter of the Colinton Rural Fire Brigade \* No 81 \* August 2008



*PRIUS – Rein at the wheel*

## Committee 2008-2009:

**Fire Captain:** Graham Povey

**Senior Deputy:** Nick Goldie

**Deputies:** Bob Morison, Tony Campbell, Jeremy Mears

**President:** Martin Hughes

**Secretary:** Nick Goldie

**Treasurer:** Bob Morison

**Special projects:** Tony Campbell

**Training Officer:** Jeremy Mears

**Equipment Officer:** tba

**Community Awareness:** Nick Goldie

**Permits:** Graham Povey

**NSW RFSA Delegate:** Jeremy Mears

## Call out:

Mid-morning on *Monday 28 July* there was pager message: *Fire Call MVA*. Cooma FireComs knew only that there had been a single 'triple zero' call, for a car on fire "five to ten kilometres south of Michelago."

Colinton *One* (Graham, Barry) was soon on the road heading north, while *Seven Alpha* (Jeremy, Martin, Nick) turned north from Baroona Road, meeting Michelago *One* heading south. A second message from FireComs was that the MVA was at Bumbalong Road ... but it wasn't there either. The uncertain conclusion: that someone had been in trouble, stopped, fixed the problem, and gone on their way. Crews were home for lunch. 

## Training:

The Colinton Brigade conducts training every month on the second Saturday, at two o'clock, at the Station at Colinton. Everyone is welcome.

The Junior brigade is in action, every second Thursday night. Contact Bob Morison or Tony Campbell for details. 

## Training (2):

On *Saturday 26 July*, Canberra Toyota kindly supplied a hybrid Toyota *Prius* and one of their trainers, Wayne Puckett. The event was very well attended, with members from Cooma, Bredbo, Smiths Road, Michelago, Anembo, Numeralla, Nimmitabel as well as Colinton, all keen to find out about the particular problems of dealing with hybrid vehicles in an emergency situation.

Wayne Puckett was re-assuring: there is little danger of spillage or electrocution, unless the unwary rescuer starts cutting cables or inserting inquisitive fingers. The loudest message: the orange cables, mostly underneath the vehicle, carry a powerful current. And there are two points, front and back, where the vehicle can be 'switched off' – which may not be the case even when it is silent and motionless.

The morning finished with a barbecue, a good opportunity to meet members of our neighbouring brigades. 

### Training 3:

Members from Bredbo, Numeralla, Shannons Flat, Colinton (Graham, Jeremy, Nick) and other brigades took part in the four day chainsaw course: two nights of theory at Polo Flat, and then one or two days (depending on the certificate) of practical instruction on a property at Pepper Creek near Numeralla.



*Chainsaw – sharpening in the field (pic by Bruce English)*

The basic course covers 'cross-cutting' dealing with trees already on the ground, particularly useful for clearing blocked roads and tracks. The more advanced components of the course cover tree felling in general, and the special requirements of 'fire-line' tree felling and problem trees.



*The first essentials (pic by Bruce English)*

All the participants in the course had some previous experience of using a chainsaw, but for even the most experienced there was something to learn. The over-riding message, in all activities involving the chainsaw, is safety; and that safety is achieved by good saw maintenance, good skills, and never-failing vigilance. 

### Open Day 2008:

RFS Open Day will be held on Saturday 20 September. Watch this space... 

## Value for money?

In an earlier issue of the *Courier* we raised the question of expenses, compensation, and the value of volunteer services to the community. We are pleased to note that the Australian Council of State Emergency Services (ACSES) has commissioned a report from the Australian Fire Authorities Council (AFAC) and that this report can be seen at on the AFAC website.

The report focuses on SES members, and concludes that each active members volunteers an average of 3.92 hours per week, though the review suggests this may be a low figure as the survey was done at a quiet period.

“The NSW and Victorian SES provide outstanding value for money ... for every dollar spent by governments, the SES contributes between \$1.30 and \$3.73 to the community ... providing a strong argument for enhanced support.”

The full report can be seen at:

[http://www.afac.com.au/awsv2/publications/documents/ValueOfVolunteerTime\\_final.pdf](http://www.afac.com.au/awsv2/publications/documents/ValueOfVolunteerTime_final.pdf) ↪

## Brigade membership:

Membership: please pay by cash at training, or cheque to The Treasurer, Colinton Rural Fire Brigade, 88 Weemala Lane, Michelago NSW 2620.

Membership fees: \$10.00 for residents, \$50.00 for non-residents. Donations are always welcome. If paying by mail, please provide a return address so a receipt can be mailed to you. ↪

## Riding in the car:

CSIRO researcher Justin Leonard has continued his work on the effects of bushfires on ordinary saloon cars. Many

people have perished in or near their cars in bushfires over the years, and there have been various guidelines published on ‘what to do if you are caught in your car’.

Recent research takes account of modern materials and automotive construction. A number of cars, donated by the NRMA, were burned at the RFS Hot Fire Training Facility, near Mogo on the NSW south coast. The cars were fitted with a system of sensors to monitor heat and toxic fumes in various parts of the cars’ interior.

There were some important findings:

- Using a woollen blanket in either the front or rear footwell of a vehicle is the most effective way to reduce exposure to high temperatures and toxic fumes
- Face the car towards the approaching fire
- Direct flame contact makes the vehicle ‘untenable’ almost immediately
- Plastic coverings and components are the main source of toxic fumes – which may be more significant than the heat
- Using the air conditioner (in ‘recycle’ mode) may keep conditions more comfortable, but will not increase chances of survival
- There was no significant involvement of the fuel systems.

AFAC says “sheltering inside a vehicle is a high-risk strategy and it is highly unlikely that a person will survive in all but the mildest circumstances.”

Preparing your home, and deciding *early* whether to stay or go, is a far safer strategy.

See: [www.bushfirecrc.com](http://www.bushfirecrc.com) and [www.afac.com.au](http://www.afac.com.au) ↪



Items for **The Colinton Courier** to Nick Goldie  
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by the first Saturday each month, or to any  
Committee member. For production assistance  
we are grateful to:

\*The Sharp Corporation of Australia Pty Ltd,  
Fyshwick,

\*Noel Teys Real Estate 0428 625 307

**The Colinton Courier** is also available at

[www.michelagoregion.org.au/bushfire/brigades  
.htm](http://www.michelagoregion.org.au/bushfire/brigades.htm)

Views expressed in **The Colinton Courier** are  
not necessarily those of the editor, the Brigade,  
or the RFS.



### **Cooma Council:**

Colinton brigade President Martin Hughes has announced that he will be standing for Cooma Shire Council in the election in September. We wish him well, and look forward to being directly represented on the Council. Martin says: "Five years with the Colinton brigade has given me a unique insight into the special needs of the rural people in the Shire." 

### **Bigfoot and a Massive Fire:**

*Excerpts from a report (MyRFS 7 August)  
by Geoff Parish of Gosford, in his third  
week of deployment assisting American fire  
fighters in California who are experiencing  
one of their worst fire seasons on record.*

The RFS veteran has command of between 100 to 150 fire fighters who are working tirelessly to establish control lines and establish back burns. Geoff's camp has roughly 1100 to 1200 people in it. Crews include Hispanic, Indian Americans,

Alaskans, Australian and New Zealand fire fighters.

The terrain of the Eureka west coast, at the top of California is dangerous to say the least, a conclusion Geoff came to after witnessing it by helicopter. "I flew the line by helicopter and realised how steep it was – 2000ft straight drop."

Native American sacred land also posed a problem initially: "...they do their initiations there, and non-Indian people aren't allowed on to that mountain peak... so we devised ways to back-burn and defend it without actually walking on it."

This is also one of the places where the Bigfoot legend comes from, which isn't exactly comforting when you're checking containment lines by yourself at night. The Native American Indians call it Sasquatch and believe that it inhabits parts of this area ... 



### **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 4131  
0419 406 908**

