

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & EDUCATION > BUSHFIRE-READY NEIGHBOURHOODS NEWSLETTER

Issue 9 • Fire and Emergency Services Conference Edition • July 2017



Helping Tasmanian communities to work together to prevent, prepare for and respond to bushfires.

Welcome to issue 9 of the Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods newsletter.

The theme for this edition is celebrating our TFS volunteers. We also showcase a few examples of the partnerships and engagement to educate residents about local bushfire risk and preparedness.

- Volunteer Engagement Kits
- Riding for the Disabled, Lenah Valley Brigade and BRN – Working Together
- Water Tank Signage Information
- Bushfire Survival Plan – Online Tool
- Volunteer Engagement with BRN – Under the Spotlight
- Dolphin Sands – Signs of Collaboration

TFS Volunteer Brigade Engagement Kits – Available Now!

Based on feedback from some of our volunteer brigades, the Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods program now has three regional volunteer brigade engagement kits available to borrow for your community engagement events.

Included in the engagement kits is a 'Bushfire ready event here today' sign, and Community Protection Planning and Fire Danger Rating pull-up banners.

Brigades are encouraged to contact Community Development and Education to arrange to borrow a kit or to talk with their regional Community Development Officer. generic.communityed@fire.tas.gov.au or 1800 000 699

Peter Middleton
A/Manager Community Development & Education



From left to right: Lenah Valley Fire Brigade volunteers Domenic Alloca and Colin Quon, RDA Kalang President Jordan Bush, Bodie the horse, RDA volunteers Janine and Raellene, TFS CDO Lesley King and DPIPWE Veterinarian Eileen Wronski

Collaborations with Riding for the Disabled in Lenah Valley

Riding for the Disabled Association Kalang (RDA) in Lenah Valley is a voluntary, not-for-profit organisation whose aim is to provide equine therapy to people of all ages with disabilities.

The RDA Kalang complex is 5km from the Hobart CBD and is nestled within a semi-rural area including moderate-steep gullies and thick dry eucalypt forest at the base of Mt Wellington on Kalang Avenue in Lenah Valley. It includes a number of feed sheds in small paddocks, a large shed, indoor stables and an arena. Up to seven horses reside fulltime on the property.

The Tasmania Fire Service Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods program identified Lenah Valley as a high-risk area that would benefit from community engagement activities. Lesley King, the Community Development Officer in the south, received a request from RDA Kalang President, Jordan Bush, to assist with their bushfire hazards and risks. Planning involved engaging key stakeholders to work

collaboratively with RDA Kalang volunteers to facilitate a bushfire-ready property workshop.

The onsite workshop was held at RDA Kalang in July 2015 with 19 people attending including the RDA Kalang President, Safety Officer and many volunteers; a veterinarian from the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Wildlife and Environment (DPIPWE); the Manager of the Wellington Park Trust; members of the Lenah Valley Fire Brigade; and the CDO of the Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods program.

As part of the property workshop, Emma Gardner, First Officer Lenah Valley Fire Brigade, highlighted five key criteria of bushfire risk and the things that can be done to mitigate these risks. The criteria are access/egress; structure features and materials; water supply; defensible space; and additional hazards. Following this session, Eileen Wronski, a Vet from DPIPWE, presented information about animal management in emergency response and recovery.

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In the afternoon, discussions took place about what to do next after hearing bushfire risk information. The RDA Kalang volunteers then developed plans for evacuation as well as for property works and ongoing maintenance for bushfire mitigation.

Following this workshop, RDA Kalang was able to engage with the Workskills Work for the Dole Mobile Team and Hobart City Council to access support for clearing areas to minimise bushfire risk on the property. A once very scrubby area around the stables and arena is now easily managed by occasional clearing work and trimming lower branches of large trees. This work has potentially reduced the risk of embers and radiant heat impact by fire and created access for firefighters into the area close to the buildings.

With vegetation management of the property now in place, Lesley then offered to assist with the RDA Kalang emergency evacuation plan and provided information on things to consider including standard operating procedures, contingencies, moving horses at high-risk times such as Christmas school holidays when the facility is not in use, and evacuation triggers relating to alerts and warnings. With this key emergency information, the RDA Kalang evacuation plan is a flexible, realistic and workable document.

The President, Jordan Bush, explains that “We found this initiative a very valuable activity for our volunteers. The information imparted to our team in the workshop by stakeholders was incredibly practical and gave us a real appreciation for what was needed. Further collaboration between stakeholders on our planning has led to a state of readiness and confidence amongst our team.”



Workshop attendees discuss bushfire history of the area

Emma Gardner, explains, “We had made contact with this vulnerable group in the past but, with Lesley pulling everyone together on a more formal day, it gave us an opportunity to engage more intensively with this group. We spent the whole time with a focus on their risks and on steps to make the area safer from bushfires. The Vet from DPI/PWE was awesome, especially by being very blunt with the group about potential risks and hazards for the horses during and after a bushfire. It was a great day with a wonderful outcome. It is reassuring to know that this group now has a realistic bushfire survival plan as a result of this workshop. In the event that a major fire does affect our area, I am much more comfortable with the actions the group now intends to take.”

Lesley King
A/Coordinator Community Development

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Water Tank Signage

Time and time again, local volunteer brigades are approached by residents asking, “how do I let you know which water tank on our property is OK for firefighting purposes?”

Recently, changes have been made to the building in bushfire-prone areas legislation to require firefighting water supplies to be identified in new buildings. This is not compulsory on already built residences and is not retrospective, but existing properties are encouraged to adopt this standard as part of their bushfire preparedness. This means residents can retro-fit signage to their tank that identifies a water supply for firefighting purposes.

The best way to let the brigade know which tank to use is to identify it with an approved and recognisable sign. These signs will aid firefighters to quickly identify water supplies for firefighting, thereby improving firefighter safety and firefighting effectiveness.

Ideally, the retrofit sign should be located within 1 metre of the outlet, or remote off-take, of a static water supply dedicated for firefighting (minimum volume 10,000 litres). The approved sign is approximately 300mm x 300mm, coloured red and with a white retro reflective logo.

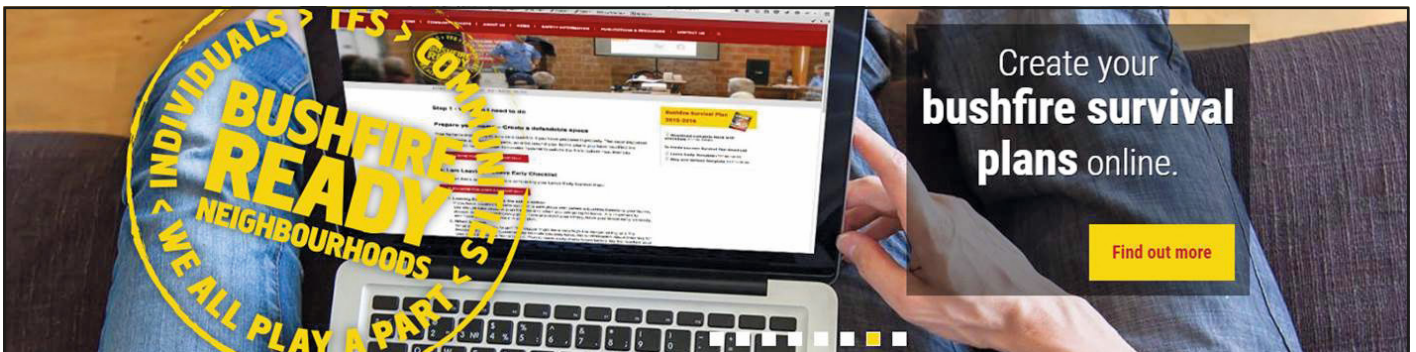
These signs may be purchased from safety signage suppliers or from Tas Fire Equipment in their bushfire products range. Contact 6230 8669 or visit tasfireequipment.com.au



An example of how the water tank sign should be placed

More information about bushfire water tank specifications, location of the tank on a property and signage can be found in the Bushfire Information Publications available on the fire.tas.gov.au website under Building for Bushfire and also the Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods section of the TFS website at fire.tas.gov.au/brn

Lesley King
A/Coordinator Community Development



By following four simple steps, you can create your own Bushfire Survival Plan/s.

Click on the link below to get started:

www.bushfirereadyneighbourhoods.tas.gov.au/create-your-bushfire-survival-plans



Volunteer Engagement with BRN – Under the Spotlight

The Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods program aims to bring together ‘neighbourhoods’ of people with a common focus to reduce the risk associated with bushfire in their area. In previous newsletters we have highlighted some of the stakeholders that are engaging the community with the preparedness message.

As I consider our aim is to have a sustainable program that supports behaviour change among residents to be more prepared for bushfire, I can’t help but think about the impact our TFS volunteers have in their area. The volunteers are an incredible asset not just because they give their time freely to their local community, but also because they are an active part of the BRN program. Since November 2016, I have been working in Squeaking Point near Port Sorell and this is where I met Mike Connell. Mike has three adult children and has been a school teacher for most of his life. Mike likes bushwalking and trekking, boating (mostly on yachts) and is a pilot. Interestingly, Mike actually built his own plane ‘Jodel’, which is a French design, and he has been flying for the last 30 years. It is not uncommon for Mike to fly to Flinders Island for lunch.

How long have you been a TFS Volunteer, Mike?

“I have been a volunteer for 15 years and Brigade Chief for the last 4 years.”

Why did you want to become a volunteer?

“When I moved to the Port Sorell area, I could see there was a risk and a potential danger and I thought it wasn’t fair to expect someone else to look after me. So I thought I should do something to look after myself and those around me.”

How important is it for the community to be active in preparing themselves and their properties for bushfire?

“It’s important for all people as Tassie is bushfire-prone but particularly in areas where there is bush around. People need to take some responsibility themselves if they’ve bought in a bushy area. This can mean many things; they could join their local brigade, develop awareness, or do some activities to be better prepared. Another thing is we don’t live in isolation and we all need to look after our neighbours; we should know who is in our street and who might be incapacitated.”



Mike Connell with ‘Jodel’

How does the Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods program help?

“BRN provides an opportunity to connect with a captive audience. It’s the best way to get the word out and to promote community awareness about bushfire safety. And it is taking some of the pressure off volunteers through empowering and informing the community. Safety can no longer rely solely on volunteers. It has to become a community responsibility.”

How have you been involved and why did you get involved?

“I have become involved as the Brigade Chief and I am also a Squeaking Point resident. I came to the Community Forum held last year and felt that it gave an avenue for the community to get in and learn and to take some responsibility for where they live and for their lifestyle. I now have been involved in regular Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods group meetings where the group has begun to develop an emergency phone tree system for Squeaking Point. It is a great idea as once we had a potentially dangerous fire on Milldam Road. If the phone tree was up, we would have had many more people aware – which meets the TFS priority to alert people.”

*Suzette Harrison
Community Development Officer (North/Northwest)*



Dolphin Sands – Signs of Collaboration

Dolphin Sands on the mid-east coast of Tasmania is an identified high bushfire-prone area and a Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods community since August 2016. Local bushfire-ready activities have engaged locals and visitors to be more prepared and to spread the word about local bushfire risks. A key TFS volunteer contact has been an important component of the BRN program coming in to the community and engaging with the locals.

Gary Stoward is a Dolphin Sands local, a volunteer at the Swansea Fire Brigade, the Neighbourhood Watch Area Coordinator and member of the Dolphin Sands Ratepayers Association Inc. (DSRA). Gary helps to coordinate a mobile fire pump that residents can borrow when they manage vegetation on their properties with burning off. The DSRA group assisted with a bushfire-ready pop-up café and property workshop directed by the Swansea volunteer fire brigade. Gary and the local TFS volunteers continue to assist local residents to be safe, not only by fighting local fires also by engaging with and educating the locals in bushfire preparedness. With the assistance of BRN, the DSRA have upgraded two roadside fire danger signs which has led to fewer incidents of visitors lighting campfires on beaches.

Gary explains: “Dolphin Sands community has a mix of permanent and temporary residents with a large influx of visitors during holiday periods. The area is recognised by TFS as a very high fire danger area throughout the whole year. The new signs replace items that were over 20 years old and the local residents association believes they will greatly assist residents and visitors alike in promoting awareness of the bush fire danger in our area.”

To add to these local strategies to manage the bushfire risk, the Fuel Reduction Unit of TFS and Glamorgan Spring Bay Council has plans to engage landholders and government, assisted by the local brigade, on fuel reduction burns in the area to control gorse and highly flammable weeds.

*Lesley King
A/Coordinator Community Development*



The Dolphin Sands community mobile fire pump



Before and after warning signage at Dolphin Sands

1800 000 699

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