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fire & rescue

The New Zealand Fire Service Magazine

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\$1m up in smoke

Fire & Rescue is the flagship publication of the New Zealand Fire Service.

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Front cover: The Mt Allan plantation fire fighting effort will cost over \$1m. Photo Otago Daily Times

Back cover: Taumaranui brigade celebrates 100 years. Photo Derek Quinn

Contributions to Fire & Rescue

We welcome ideas for articles, news and events that would be of interest to other Fire Service staff and volunteers. Draft articles and photos (pictures need to be at least 1MB) can be emailed to fire.rescue@fire.org.nz or contact the editor Karlum Lattimore on 04 496 3702.

Post written material and photos, or photo CDs to:
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Teamwork and tenacity take the Challenge

This year's Road Crash Rescue Challenge saw tricky extractions done under pressure, under the exacting eyes of three assessors and, for the first time, airbags were added to the mix for some of the heavy lifting.

The Challenge was held in Christchurch as part of the United Fire Brigades' Association annual conference and attracted 13 teams from brigades across the country. The Challenge was won by Morrinsville Volunteer Fire Brigade.

Chief Assessor, Senior Station Officer Dave Mitton, said this year's Road Rescue Challenge was the most technically difficult it has ever been.

"The competition now fully reflects the operational techniques and experiences we come across in real life – with the added pressures that everything is being scrutinised and has to be done by the book – without any of the shortcuts we might have to take in real life," he said.

The event is split into three components with varying scenarios for varying degrees of time-critical patient extraction.

The rescue teams all use spreaders, cutters and rams as their primary tools with tiffors for specialist scenarios. This year the airbags were introduced for a lifting scenario involving a truck and trailer unit.

"It was a tough challenge this year and I was really impressed with the teamwork and tenacity the teams showed. They all rose to the occasion when, just like real life, they came into the event not knowing what they would face but they got on with the job and kept dealing to the difficulties that cropped up," said Dave.

He says the Road Crash Rescue Challenge has gone through a period of development and is now gathering some serious interest from a growing number of brigades.

"There were quite a few 'spies' in the audience this year, checking out the finer points of how the competition is run and we're getting a lot of approaches from brigades wanting to know how to get started on preparing for this challenge."

Pictured above right is this year's winning team: Back row left to right: Paul Livingstone, Steve Cryer, Andrew Lingard, Steve Hart. Front: Shayne Morgan, Kevin Hickey.

Full results on page 15.

Hot times lead to hard slog



Photo: Marlborough Express

This summer has been expensive with two fires each chewing through over a million dollars worth of resources.

National Rural Fire Officer, Murray Dudfield, said the change from a La Nina to El Nino weather pattern was particularly noticed in Northland, which has had its driest summer in several years.

“It’s also been an expensive summer. Our two costliest fires, the plantation blaze on Mt Allan near Dunedin and the scrub and peat fire at Kaimaumau near Kaitaia, involved almost 200 rural firefighters working long hours over several weeks to control the initial fires and then manage the hot spots.”

He said these sustained, resource-intensive operations will impact on the work of the agencies and companies that supply the rural firefighters. “For instance, it may delay track maintenance by DOC and pruning or other plantation maintenance by forest owners,” he said.

Murray praised the efforts of the rural firefighters who were called out this summer, saying they put in some incredibly long hours of gruelling physical slog in many parts of the country.

Principal Rural Fire Officer for Otago, Graham Still, said the firefighting tactics used on Mt Allan were fairly straightforward. “However, there were a lot of people, diggers, tankers, helicopters and other equipment involved and I’m quite chuffed that there wasn’t a single accident.”

Graham thanked all those involved. “Everyone, particularly the guys on the end of the shovels, worked incredibly hard and did a hell of a good job.”

Left: Flames leap from pine trees in Ocean Bay, Marlborough.



A 20 hectare blaze threatened property in Ocean Bay, Port Underwood, in the Marlborough Sounds. The fire burned close to the electricity transmission lines that feed the Cook Strait cable and supply was turned off.



Firefighters were kept busy at this scrub fire at Taheke in Northland which burned for over a week and forced the evacuation of three homes.



Testing times for the hazmat/command units

The Rugby World Cup kick off is more than a year away but planning is well underway and the Fire Service is involved at a regional and national level.

To ensure that the event goes smoothly, a series of inter-agency planning groups have been established to address everything from flight and passenger arrivals through to civil defence emergencies and terrorist incidents.

The Fire Service is contributing to the planning as well as supporting national exercises to test various emergency scenarios. The most recent were held in Palmerston North and Wellington in late March. Under one scenario, the Fire Service was tasked with providing decontamination to 100 people who were 'walking wounded' or 'casualties' on stretchers.

National Manager Strategic Operations, Jim Stuart-Black, said "We believe this may have been the largest decontamination activity the Fire Service has undertaken. Western Fire Region provided crews from a number of stations and both St John Ambulance and Wellington Free Ambulance provided medics who are trained and equipped to operate in the warm zone to assist with patient management. The exercise was held at Linton Military Camp and defence personnel played the role of 'casualties'."

"We believe this may have been the largest decontamination activity the Fire Service has undertaken."



Just some of the 100 people who were taken through the country's largest mass decontamination exercise held recently at Linton Military Camp.

The intent was to test how long it would take to decontaminate 100 people, the number of personnel required to support the high number of casualties, the amount of water used and the ground space required to support the operation.

“The task was completed in just under two hours and provided us with an excellent opportunity to test the new decontamination systems under pressure, and also consider the

wider planning and resourcing implications. The exercise demonstrated the value of the new decontamination system while highlighting areas for improvement in the operational processes required to support a mass decon event.”

Jim expressed his thanks to the crews from Western Region St John Ambulance, Wellington Free Ambulance and the NZ Defence Force for supporting the event.



Christchurch firefighter Mike Yeates (left) and SO Stephen Butler demonstrate the command unit's technology.



A soldier 'casualty' is taken through the decontamination process on a stretcher to demonstrate the techniques used for people who have been incapacitated during the emergency.



Demonstrating safe disposal.



The capabilities of the hazmat/command vehicles were also recently demonstrated for the Minister of Internal Affairs, Nathan Guy (pictured right). We also invited the news media to come along to help us show the rest of New Zealand the latest addition to the fleet. Christchurch fire, ambulance crews demonstrate the capability of the hazmat/command vehicle and its decontamination equipment.

INSIDE THE FIRE – Testing the foam approach

Putting the wet stuff on the red stuff wasn't working on a two-storey high tower of burning car bodies so Onehunga Senior Station Officer, Dave Woon, got creative.

It began with multiple 111 calls to a fire at a car wrecker's yard at Onehunga.

Onehunga's pump was first to arrive at about half past five in the afternoon. SSO Dave Woon reported in and his crew began pouring water on the huge pile of car bodies.

"The water wasn't that effective," he said. "Since it was a fairly new wrecker's yard, there were tanks to keep the runoff in so I thought we could pretty much do what we wanted and pump out the tanks later. There were no people in any danger so I looked at the aerial and thought about what it could do and wondered about using foam – even

though it's usually something we use for vegetation.

"I thought we'd try the two classes of foam. We used the Class A we already had on Ellerslie's type four Bronto to drop the water surface tension and soak into the car bodies."

He then called for the Ponsonby foam tender and its Class B foam.

Station Officer, Phil Grace (now SSO), arrived with the foam tanker and said by running the foam into the aerial's inlet for the boom, the crew got the height they needed to get above the fire and the breadth to get across it.

"We pumped the foam solution and water into the boom inlet rather

than through the aerial's pump inlet which would have aerated the foam solution, making it difficult to pump. The Class B laid a light blanket even though it was applied through the unaerated monitor nozzle."

The combination of foam smothered the fire and put an end to it very quickly.

Phil says wreckers' yards can burn for a long time and foam is something other crews could consider – particularly if there is no serious issue with the runoff.

Dave said the fire was started by car batteries shorting out as the cars became crushed under the weight of the cars above them.



Dave Woon (left) and Avondale Blue Watch members FF Matt Sadler (middle) SO John Barlow and SFF Neil Crockett (far right) show off the more usual configuration for Class B foam application.

Fire facts:

Date: 14.04.09, 5:32pm

Appliances used:

Onehunga 221

Ellerslie 274

Ontahuhu 311

Ponsonby 261

8pm back at stations

Electrical fault leads to total loss

It began with a bad smell like rotting meat. The rural couple living in the timber house hunted all over, looking for a dead rat or mouse.

A few days later, they went into town for the afternoon and came back to find their home had burned to the ground.

Auckland Fire Safety Officer, Terry Castle, said locals first noticed the smoke late in the afternoon and initially thought it was a bonfire. When a neighbour went to investigate at about half past five, he was just in time to see the house collapse.

“When I came with an electrical inspector to investigate the cause of the fire, the tenant told us about the horrible smell. That would have been the smell of decomposing insulation around wiring. “We could see that the fire may have started in a wall in the lounge and the tenant told us that the video attached to the TV in that area had begun acting up early on the morning of the fire and the picture had fluctuated and at times was distorted. That would

have been electricity surging because of the deterioration in the wiring.”

Terry says they found an electrical distribution box in the wall that showed signs of arcing.

The couple lost everything they owned, including a business being operated out of the house. The only things they managed to salvage were a couple of cast iron cooking pots and a few cups that survived inside the dishwasher.

Terry said if the house had a monitored fire alarm or a sprinkler system installed, much more may have been saved.

Waiuku Chief Fire Officer, Kevin Drummond, says when the brigade arrived the house was well involved. “The end result was inevitable really. All we could do was pour water on and since it was a rural, non-reticulated area, we needed to call in for much of that water.”

Fire facts:

Date: Friday 19 February 2010

Cause: arcing in electrical distribution box

Loss: total

Resources:

Waiuku brigade two pumps
 Patumahoe brigade two pumps
 Papakura tanker
 Auckland Fire Police
 Waiau Pa Brigade one pump
 Auckland Command Unit
 Volunteer Support Officer
 Auckland Fire Safety Officer
 Ambulance in attendance

All that remained of the large two-storey house near Waiuku, south of Auckland.



Standardising the response to alarm callouts

The New Zealand Fire Service has now implemented a nationally consistent operational protocol for the number of fire appliances it sends to unconfirmed emergencies at low-risk buildings with sprinkler systems.

Senior officers have carried out a risk assessment on all buildings with sprinklers installed and those without some special risk are now receiving a standard two pump PDA (pre-determined attendance). More appliances are immediately dispatched if there is a confirming 111 call or any indication of an actual fire.

Buildings such as rest homes, hospitals or buildings that contain hazardous or flammable materials will continue to receive a higher PDA based upon their risk.

National Commander, Mike Hall, says “Until now, the response has not been consistent or based on the real risk to the building or its occupants. Instead it has been determined locally by the resources available and/or tradition. The number of fire appliances sent varied between stations and regions. Larger metropolitan brigades tended

to send as many as six appliances, while the smaller provincial brigades sent one or two.

The installation of sprinkler systems effectively eliminates the risk of a major fire. Sprinklers are designed to detect a fire in its incipient stage and contain it while the building is evacuated. Over the last 10 years there have been just five fatalities in buildings with sprinkler systems.

“All these deaths involved people in very close proximity to the fire (ie clothing or bedding caught fire). These types of fires are often not hot enough to trigger the sprinkler before the victim is burned.

Sending fewer appliances to investigate alarm activations should result in less traffic congestion, less disruption to local business and less risk of traffic incidents while on route.

Pictured: The standard response to a false alarm from a low-risk building – in this case a café in Blenheim.

The change makes better use of Fire Service resources, particularly firefighters’ time – allowing more community fire safety and education activities, training and risk management activities.

Interesting facts:

6,000 buildings with sprinklers

Only 1 in 20 alarm activations in sprinklered buildings are actual fires

Only 0.03% of alarm calls are fires that take more than two hoses to extinguish

Over half buildings with sprinklers (55%) already had two-pump response

Additional 2,500 changed to the standard response

New duties, new image, new name

The country's Fire Police volunteers have a long and proud history within the Fire Service.

Over the past few years they've been getting a 'makeover' with the introduction of contemporary uniforms to meet the varied and growing demands of the role. They're also up for a name change to better describe the wider scope of their duties.

Director of Operations and Training, Paul McGill, said "Fire Police have an important and valuable role providing a wide range of operational support. Traditionally, this has included road traffic management, carrying out salvage, managing lighting plants, manning the canteens and providing support for command units at major incidents. The list of available duties continues to grow as stations also look for help with administration, fire risk management and other station duties."

Another change is the loss of the ability for Fire Police to be sworn in as constables following the introduction of the new Policing Act 2008. This does not affect the actual duties of Fire Police as they are still covered by Section 28 of the Fire Service Act (Powers of Chief Fire Officers).

"There are around 40 Fire Police units in the country and my group has been reviewing the Operational Instruction relating to their duties, training and uniform to make sure we reflect the growth in the role. This will include finding a name that better suits the range of work being done and we are liaising with the UFBA (United Fire Brigades' Association) on this," said Paul.

It's expected a new name will be agreed on later this year.

The new breathable jackets for ops support volunteers. The lightweight blue R7 helmet provides the same level of impact and shock resistance as the standard firefighter's helmet but comes without the inner thermal dome as this is needed only by those carrying out interior fire fighting.



NEWS BRIEF

New smoke alarm for the deaf

Reuters: Japan has developed a smoke detector for deaf people that is based on wasabi – Japan's spicy eye-watering green condiment commonly used with sushi.

If it detects smoke, the alarm sprays out a synthesised wasabi smell that wakes up people who might have slept through a conventional fire alarm.

The wasabi smoke detector was tested on 14 people, including four deaf people. Except for one person with a blocked nose, all woke up within two minutes of the smell reaching them.

The product is likely to be on sale within two years.

Youngsters save family thanks to quick thinking and Get Firewise

By Sandra K. Bogart

Three Kaikohe East School pupils became local heroes when they saved their family from a house fire in February. Recently their actions were recognised at a school assembly.



The youngsters proudly show off their certificates.

“We were on the deck when I saw flames through the window. I yelled fire, fire,” said eight-year-old Jahhalo Harris.

The children were scared, but they knew what to do thanks to the Firewise programme and their mum Missy, who was an ambassador with the Te Kotahitanga Home Fire Safety project.

While the next door neighbour heard the children’s shouts and rang 111, Jahhalo, her seven-year-old brother Jreahan and five-year-old sister Jahnequa ran inside, grabbed their one-year-old baby brother and woke their uncle and father up,

all the while yelling “fire, fire, fire”.

“I shook our Dad to wake him up,” said a brave seven-year-old Jreahan.

Kaikohe Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO), Wiremu Matene, said the fire may have started when a lit cigarette was forgotten on a window sill in the children’s bedroom. The fire started at 9.30pm on 25 February.

The three children were recognised at a school assembly in mid-March. Fire Service Operational Support Officer, Agnes Maxwell (also the children’s auntie) and Wiremu were at the assembly to present the youngsters with Certificates of Appreciation.

Aggie, who presented the Firewise programme at Kaikohe East School last year, was very proud of her whānau, “The kids were really pumped up when the fire truck arrived, but they knew what to do and didn’t appear scared. Jreahan had literally towed his father out of bed.”

Wiremu said the children were beaming after the fire when all the firefighters came round to congratulate them.

“I told my whole class about it,” Jreahan said.

The children had practised with their mum, what to do in case of fire.

A couple of minutes with... Paul Baxter



Where are you stationed?

Eastern Fire Region HQ-Napier

What's your title?

Fire Region Manager (Eastern)

What's been your progression within the NZFS over the past 25 years?

Started as a firefighter and worked through firefighter and officer ranks, becoming a chief in 1998. I worked in NHQ in the Media Promotions and Communications team as senior communications advisor and national partnerships manager on secondment. In 2007 I was appointed to the Fire Region Manager's role back in Eastern.

Children?

Giverny (15) and Louis (10).

What's the one thing that sticks in your mind about the job?

How much New Zealanders trust us to look after them.

If you could make one change to the Fire Service what would it be?

Our people would embrace change and new approaches to our work.

Your most embarrassing moment on the job?

Crashing a fire-truck on a runway resulting in an international flight having to be diverted.

What's one thing people would be surprised to learn about you?

I once worked as a diver feeding sharks for a job.

Favourite book?

"Don't sweat the small stuff"

Favourite movie?

Top Gun

Favourite TV show?

Two And a Half Men and Big Bang Theory (they always show together)

Favourite music group?

U2 (all-time), Kings of Leon (currently)

Favourite sport?

To watch rugby, to partake in wakeboarding

Favourite holiday destination?

Cuba

If I wasn't in the Fire Service I'd be?

Flying a plane

The challenge is on

On Saturday 22 May, 420 firefighters will race to the top of Auckland’s iconic Sky Tower in a heart-pounding effort to raise funds for the Leukaemia & Blood Foundation.

The Firefighter Sky Tower Challenge is now in its seventh year with firefighters from New Zealand and overseas racing up the 1,103 steps to claim the title of fastest man, fastest woman or fastest team. All wear their full fire-fighting kit and breathing apparatus.

The competition is not only to win the stair climb, but also to raise the most money for the Leukaemia and Blood Foundation.

There will be fierce battling for two of the top slots in the race. South Auckland Senior Firefighter, Doug Kinsella, who was overall winner for the past two events is taking a year off this year. So too is East Coast Bays Senior Firefighter Steve Callagher

who has been the one to beat in the 40-54yrs Masters section.

Meanwhile Paihia Volunteer Fire Brigade will be the one to beat in the fundraising stakes – they seized the fundraising trophy for the fourth consecutive year last year raising \$15,670 and contributing to the record \$148,000 raised for the Leukaemia and Blood Foundation.

Go to www.firefightersclimb.org.nz for more information or to help with the fundraising.

K99 out now

K99 is now out and can be seen at a station near you.

In this edition:

- An update on Home Fire Safety Checks. They’ve reduced structure fires by 80% in the UK – what could they do here?
- An ACC supported initiative in Mangere.
- A fire investigation/fire education compendium for fire appliances.
- A new smoke alarm partnership with a national retailer.
- Mike Hall talks about a ‘value project’ he has commissioned and discusses Owen Kinsella’s new role.
- Access to 10-year photoelectric smoke alarms.
- Get Firewise update.
- FireCall covers off the UFBA conference, a USAR video, the Sky Tower Challenge, Kiwi Pro Wrestling and awards to the girls who appeared in our latest television commercial.

Doing it in his sleep – raising money and raising fire safety awareness

The annual Cancer Society fundraiser, Relay for Life, is a huge event in communities around New Zealand. This year 13 members of the Napier Volunteer Fire Brigade took part in the 24-hour walk and raised \$2,000. They also made the most of the opportunity to talk to the public and promote various fire safety messages. Here firefighter Rodney Hearfield grabs some sleep in between walking and talking.



2010 Events Calendar

Get out those calendars because there are a few dates coming up that you best put a ring around.

<p>May 1 National Darts Tournament, Papamoa Contact: sandford@orcon.net.nz</p>	<p>May 8-9 NZFS National Texas No Limit Hold'em Tournament, Wellington Limited Seats. Contact: nzfspoker@paradise.net.nz</p>	<p>May 9 Putaruru Annual Golf Tournament Putaruru Volunteer Brigade Contact: Robyn.Bruce@fire.org.nz 027 323 0538</p>	<p>May 20 Wairarapa Sub Assn Golf Tournament, Carterton Golf Club Contact: henry.stenchman@fire.org.nz</p>
<p>May 22 Skytower Challenge Entries closed</p>	<p>June 4-6 (Queen's Birthday) Wairau Valley Volunteer Fire Brigade, Golden Jubilee Celebrations Contact: Rosanne Turner, 021 104 2072 millcroft@xtra.co.nz</p>	<p>July 17-18 National Snooker Tournament, Hawera Contact: Colin.dudley@fire.org.nz</p>	<p>July 18 Wellington Provincial Golf Tournament, Feilding Golf Club Contact: Warren.Dunn@fire.org.nz</p>

For the latest information on Fire Service sports events go to: Firenet/Sports/upcomingsportsevents

National Road Crash Rescue Challenge 2010 Results

Team	Controlled	Entrapped	Immediate	Team Leader	Technical Team	Medical Team	Overall
Morrinsville	3	2	10	6	2	2	1
Whitianga	2	3	6	1	1	5	2
Greytown	1	8	1	3	7	1	3
Cromwell	8	1	2	2	3	4	4
Feilding	4	4	6	4	4	7	5
Hawera	5	5	4	5	5	3	6
Balclutha	6	6	3	8	6	6	7
Rolleston	10	10	5	10	10	9	8
Stratford	9	9	9	9	9	10	8
Kirwee	7	12	8	7	8	12	10
Milton	11	7	11	11	11	8	11
Blenheim	13	11	13	13	13	11	12
Ranfurly	12	13	11	12	12	13	13

