



HUFF STUFF
Newsletter
Issue 1
September 2015

Thank you!

Thank you to all of you who attended the facilitator workshops. Emily and I hope that you found them useful. A special thank you to Tanya from NSWF&R for her invaluable assistance, and to Margaret Grimshaw for helping with catering. Thanks also to Simon from Cyber Shed and Bill from SES and of course the crews from NSWF&R. We hope to get your ID card and lanyard to you as soon as possible. For those who missed the workshops we will run another one, hopefully this month, to try and catch up.

Getting Started

You can wait for your ID card or you can start if you feel confident and already know some of your neighbours. As the fire season is coming up you should probably start by having conversations around planning for bush fires. This fire season is predicted to be 'above normal'. Ask your neighbours what their triggers are for leaving early. It's a good way to begin the discussion.

Communications

We will soon be sending you a form that grants us permission to share your contact details with other facilitators.

Our next step is to set up an effective communication system so that we can send you timely information.

We will send you any information we get from reliable sources that we think you may be able to pass on. This will be before a predicted event and after, but not while an event is happening. At that time everyone will be taking shelter and attending to their own situation.

You will receive emergency warnings from the emergency authorities through the usual channels – television, radio, mobile phones and the Internet.

Send us your story

We'd love to hear how you are progressing so please send us any experiences that you would like to share.

Here is Cheryl's story:

After the 2011 wind storm:

Our street lost power for about 4 days so I let many of my neighbours know that we had plenty of hot water and could help with hot drinks etc. We also had a fire so they could come and get warm, if needed. Several took up the offer of a hot shower.

The 2013 fires:

The day we got the dire warnings of the 2013 fires moving toward Blackheath I approached residents to see if they were staying the following day - the catastrophic fire day. I said that I was staying and thought it might be useful if I collated the intentions of everyone so that the information was in one place as this

might assist emergency crews. I also collected mobile and landline numbers, gave them my contact numbers and asked if residents had access to emergency news via phone, the internet, TV, radio etc. I did not get any resistance and this was probably assisted by the fact that everyone knew me, at least by sight. A couple whose phone is unlisted for work safety reasons happily provided their contact details. Some residents who had said they would be staying later changed their mind and let me know of this. We were safe.

The 2015 bleak weather/snow warnings:

I received an email from Mina about the nasty weather expected over the upcoming days. I again visited residents providing them with the information I had received. I checked the contact details I had for them and collected details of a couple of newer residents. One new couple were not interested in being contacted or giving me their contact details so I left them my contact details just in case. I invited neighbours to come to our home for a hot shower, warmth and refreshments if we had a power outage - by this time we had backup generator power. While it wasn't required on this occasion, it was again offered after the heavy snow the following weekend when we lost power for most of the day. I checked on residents, especially an older widow who lives alone. When I didn't get a response from her I went in to her next-door neighbour who I knew had a key to her home. We opened the door and were greeted by the woman who had been huddled in her bedroom talking on the phone to a relative. She was so apologetic and had not thought that anyone would be concerned for her welfare. She was very grateful and is now arranging for me to have a key to her door and her daughter's contact details. While I was going up and down the street I was able to introduce residents to each other. Many know their close neighbours but don't know everyone in the street. It was a real social occasion! Because we have a 4WD vehicle I was also able

to take a neighbour to the village to get scripts filled - the pharmacy was closed!

My experiences have been really positive. I have been warmly welcomed by residents in the street and around the corner in Valley View Road. We have a couple of holiday rental homes and I keep in touch with the owners of these properties. They live in Sydney and always contact me if there is anything on the news about Blackheath. This was especially important to them during the 2013 fires, and after the 2015 snow I was asked to take photos of their properties for them. I have spoken about the HUFF program to friends who live on the Central Coast and they are keen to get the information so that they can help get the program going up there.

We wanted Cheryl to share her story because she epitomized the HUFF concept, initially, without even having heard about it.

Please don't feel that you have to write as much. A sentence or two is fine.

Reminders

Contact Mina

- for how many magnets you need.
- if you are having a street get together so we can come and visit.
- if you are still unsure of which houses you should do.
- if you need any resources.
- if you need help with **anything**.

Take advantage of **Cyber Shed Simon's** offer. He is planning to run the 'Twitter For Disasters' workshop 12th – 16th October so book early.

Thank you,
Mina and Emily

