

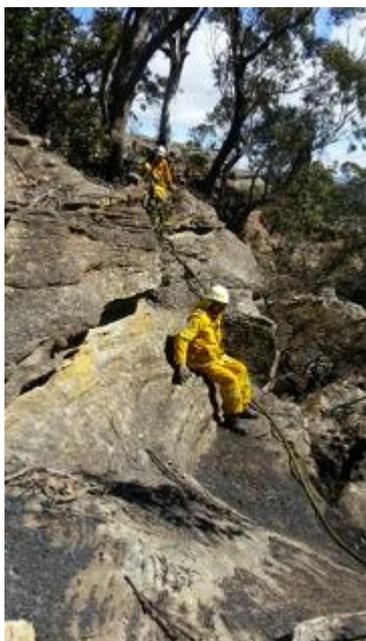


HUFF STUFF
Newsletter
Issue 20
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Greetings everyone,

The fire season is upon us and already we have had to attend to two calls, both in Mount Victoria. Luckily the fires were brought under control quickly. The first callout was to what appeared to be an unattended fire and the second was to an area near Sunset Rock, off Beaufort St that burnt out vegetation on the top of the rock platform. This second fire started in very cold and windy conditions at around 10.30 pm and was luckily noticed by a nearby resident who smelled smoke when he went outside. On further investigation he saw embers coming up from the rock face and called 000. This fire had the potential to move along the back of the houses in that street and cause significant problems.

Please be vigilant. We have already had three Total Fire Ban days and it is still early spring. As you have no doubt heard there have been many fires around the state and predictions are for a continuing dry summer and higher than average temperatures.



Difficult fire-fighting conditions near Sunset Rock, Mount Victoria.

You have probably noticed the big red and white 'Total Fire Ban' signs attached to the village signs and you may have wondered who puts them out each time. The local RFS Brigade puts out the signs for their area. This is usually done at night before the start of the 'Total Fire Ban' day and retrieved early in the morning of the next day. The signs are stored at each brigade. Just another service provided by committed volunteers.

I recently attended the monthly Community Engagement Forum to talk to other brigades from the mountains who are thinking of starting up HUFF. This is exciting news and they are all very keen so watch this space.

The 'Get Ready Weekend' days held at Mount Victoria RFS station and Blackheath RFS station proved to be very successful again this year. We had a steady flow of residents coming along to collect information and ask questions. We again have a long list of property assessments to do as well. It is so good that more and more people are prepared to take some action to prepare their properties.



Some of the many residents who came along to Get Ready Weekend.

Over the last few months I have presented preparedness talks to many groups within our village including The Men's Shed, CWA, Rotary, Red Cross and PROBUS. According to the last census over 25% of our local population is over the age of 65. It is imperative that our older residents have a plan and importantly, a close network of friends, neighbours and acquaintances around them that can form part of that plan.

A very rewarding and enjoyable activity was presenting to the students at Blackheath Public School. I spent time with each class at the school over a period of four weeks. Children all have a 'fire' story they want to share and are so keen to listen. We spoke about so many topics from 'Get Down Low and Go, Go, Go' to what it means when it's a Total Fire Ban' day and how we can prepare our properties. I have had feedback from parents who have told me their children came home and said we need to do this, we need to do that and asking if we have a plan etc. This is a great outcome and demonstrates that the messages are getting through at a younger and younger age. The Principal and the staff members were very supportive and I am grateful to have had this opportunity. I look forward to working with the students at Mount Victoria next term.



Firefighters Rachel and Mike helped me entertain the troops.

This week we had an opportunity for HUFF Facilitators to regroup and share their experiences. A common problem is that we have lots of holiday homes, rentals and houses continually changing hands. This means that facilitators have to continually revisit their neighbours in order to stay connected. Another issue that was discussed is that some people are reluctant to become involved with their neighbours and are not willing or able, for whatever reason, to prepare their properties. Unfortunately this will always be the case and there is little you can do except lead by example and try to keep everyone in the loop when it comes to passing on information. Don't forget to share the newsletters if you have email addresses and if you need to print some off for those residents whose emails you don't have, you can have them done at BANC. All in all it was a good chance to share ideas and meet other facilitators in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. And, if you have anything that you think would be useful to share please let me know and I can put it in our monthly newsletter.



Exploring the truck is always popular.



FUEL FOR THOUGHT

Neighbourhood Safer Places – NSP’s

Though titled ‘Safer places’, their definition declares ‘they cannot be considered safe’.

They can be open places with no shelter from smoke or falling embers.

They are specified as ‘places of last resort’, to go to ‘during the passage of the fire’.

They will not be staffed and may not have any amenities – even water.

They do not cater for animals.

They need not have features that offer more safety than a well-prepared house.

Joan Webster OAM



Checking a resident’s fire-fighting pump is ready for the fire season.

*Kind Regards,
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