



Water On

Newsletter No. 2

August 2012

Newsletter naming

Congratulations to Colin Bishop for winning the naming rights to this newsletter. A set of coasters and a basket of home baked muffins will shortly be sent your way.

Thank you all for your many great suggestions. You may find some of your ideas being used as sub-headings through the newsletter.

Newsletter naming ideas:

The Fiery Times, Flaming Fire, Hose End Gossip, Sooty's Monthly Sweep Up, The Hot Spot, From The Flames, Hot And Smoking, Slash And Burn , Hot News, Smoking Hot, Hot Hoses (What the!), Smoke Screen, Hosed Monthly, The Fire Line, Burning News, Sparks, Burning Issues, Mop Up, Ignition Times, The Southern Glow, Southern Embers.

Mike's Mop Up

Core Purpose "To challenge the boundaries while protecting and enhancing those things our community's value"

Direction

Recently SRFA Board members and staff took part in a strategic workshop to re-focus and clarify our goals. As part of the workshop we spent time reviewing our 'Core Purpose' which until now was a bit fuzzy. A Core Purpose is an organisation's 'reason for being' and should capture the 'soul' of the organisation, without focusing on the obvious job we do.

Southern RFA has always challenged the status quo, finding innovative solutions to deliver appropriate services to our communities and stakeholders.

We feel our Core Purpose reflects this forward thinking. For many of our groups, particularly volunteers, fire has become a small part of the job with Motor Vehicle Accident's and medical calls being the majority of incidents attended. Communities want and need this service. As an emergency organisation we have always been happy for this to occur and we will continue to support delivery in this area.

Apology to Downers

Sorry Downers for leaving you off the list of agency fire fighting crews in the last newsletter. You are just as valued as the other crews. Thank you for bringing it to our attention; you are definitely part of the Southern Rural Fire family.

Survey

In this newsletter there is a summary of results from a recent satisfaction survey we commissioned. Thanks to all those who took part.

Communication

Improved communication was a recurring comment and something we will take on board. However this is an area we all need to take stock and improve as has been highlighted recently with delivery of our training programme.



Communication cont.

With over 285 fire fighters on our books from many organisations, coordinating training is no easy task and requires a high degree of liaison, communication and cooperation. We have limited staff and make every effort to spread ourselves around.

Once the programme is agreed and set there is very little leeway for slippage and rescheduling in order to ensure people are appropriately trained and progressing through the training we ask people to indicate early on when the initial training plan is shared in November. Thanks to those organisations and individuals who have completed their set programme to date.

Communication is two way, so I encourage you all to talk to us and we'll do the same – from the survey it sounds like we all need to do better.

Remember 'if you want to go faster go alone. If you want to go further go together'. Only then will we be in a position to truly deliver on our Core Purpose.

Fire fighters survey

In 2012 Southern Rural Fire Authority contracted Research First to undertake research among fire fighters and the Southern Rural Fire Authority Board to better understand the current levels of satisfaction and identify areas for improvement. Phone interviews were undertaken with fire fighters. The following is a summary of the fire fighters responses.

The number and heading of each section in this summary refers to the related section in the full report.

If you would like a copy of the full report you can find it on line at:

<http://www.southernruralfire.org.nz/board-and-fire-fighters-2/>

3.1 Fire fighter readiness

•Most fire fighters agreed they were effectively trained.

And well done to teams that undertake training in their own time.

3.2 Effectives of training

•Three quarters of fire fighters agreed that training was effective across SRFA though some felt their area could do with a little more support in this area.

Refer to Section 3.5

3.3 Provision of ongoing training

•Over half of all fire fighters agreed that ongoing training was effective in SRFA.

•Participants who have a shorter length of service tended to agree that training was provided in an ongoing and effective manner, with longer serving members agreeing less.

This is something that the SRF team have long recognised, and ideally would like to spend more time with each team. However as with everything in life there are a few restraints.

With 285 fire fighters and only 2 trainers SRF has been stretched in the training department for some time.

With Sally coming on board there will be greater capacity and we are currently investigating options for other trainers.

Agency crew training is undertaken as part of an agreement with each company. On average 2 days per crew are put aside for training each year. As part of these agreements SRF and the company need to balance timing, training requirements and cost.

For volunteers we try and pack as much training into the evening sessions as possible, but understand time can be limited and it can take a few sessions before a unit standard is completed. Currently 3 of the 7 volunteer groups train on the same Thursday each month greatly reducing the number of evenings available for trainers to attend.

Each year we develop a training plan with each team. The plan details what training will occur and the dates. It is important that people put these training dates in their diaries in order not to fall behind in their training. Training needs to be held outside the busy season and also fit in with SRF other work loads. Re scheduling missed training is difficult and this is when teams tend to fall behind.

3.7 Number of fire fighters

•72% of participants agreed that SRFA has adequate numbers of fire fighters. When asked about their team only 55% agreed with this statement.

Numbers of fire fighters is something SRF is always balancing. We operate as a large team across the district and don't expect any one team to have enough resources or fire fighters to manage a fire event in isolation.

In order to use our resources and fire fighters wisely the closest team provide the first response while the other fire fighters and resources are called into action for ongoing support.

We are supported by the Fire Brigades who under agreement are the first response to rural fires and will attend for the first hour. You can see from the 'Burning Issues' section of this newsletter there has been 11 fires between May-July, all were attended by the Fire Service on SRF behalf. In a large scale event we would also call on outside help.

Some of Sally's role is to promote rural fire and make sure we do have adequate numbers of fire fighters.

Ensuring adequate numbers of fire fighters is the responsibility of all of us. Creating a welcoming, supportive atmosphere that allow people to develop into roles and encouraging the next generation of fire fighters to join is what will ensure rural fire has enough fire fighters in the future.

3.9 Level of equipment

- Participants also agreed that levels of equipment were adequate across SRFA.
- Agency fire fighters were less likely than any other group to agree that SRFA had adequate levels of equipment.
- Participants also indicated more practical training and more specific training for ensuring fire fighters are trained and capable of addressing the needs of fire fighting.

SRF has a database of all resources right down to the last hose reel. We keep close track of the life expectancy of all the equipment and this is coupled with a plan for replacing 'expiring' equipment.

In recent times SRF has focused on up grading a number of the vehicles. This is based on use levels and state of the vehicles.

In the next editions of the "Water On" we will bring you a more comprehensive break down of how resources are managed and the future plans for SRF resources.

3.10 Ensuring fire fighters are capable of addressing fire fighting needs

•Ongoing and more practical training was cited as the main option for ensuring fire fighters are effectively trained.

More training would be great but as is noted in section 3.5 we only have 2 trainers and limited time with agency crews, but we are working to fix this.

4.2 Response system

- 86% of fire fighters agreed that systems that are currently in place provide a timely response.
- 85% also agreed equipment was in place to ensure they could provide an effective service during a call out.

We will keep this up and look to improve it further.



Downer crew demonstrating excellent hand signals.



SFRA Team

We thought it would be useful to give a quick round up of SRF staff and who does what, encase you need to get hold of us.



Name: Mike Grant

Job Title: Principal Rural Fire Officer and Chief Executive

Job Description:

Responsible for overall management activities in the Southern Rural Fire District. Reports to SRFA Chairperson.

Contact Details:

Ph: 0274 716 095

Email: Mike.grant@southernruralfire.org.nz

Name: Elton Smith

Job Title: Operations Coordinator

Job Description:

Responsible for operational planning and managing equipment. Carrying out investigations and undertaking Health and Safety monitoring for fire fighters.

Contact Details:

Ph: 027 293 6034

Email: Elton.smith@southernruralfire.org.nz



Name: Sue Peterson

Job Title: Statistics and Administration Support

Job Description:

Collating statistics on fire activities in Southland. Putting together fire claims for the National Rural Fire Fund or sending bills for fire events.

Contact Details:

Ph: 0272 294 510

Email: Sue.peterson@southernruralfire.org.nz

Name: Sally Chesterfield

Job Title: Community and Education Coordinator

Job Description:

Promote, educate and engage communities with wise fire use. Coordinating training for fire fighters and mangers. (If you have any questions give me a call any time.)

Issue fire permits.

Contact Details:

Ph: 027 603 1102

Email: Sally.chesterfield@southernruralfire.org.nz



Burning Issues

Between May and July there have been 13 incidents. These have all be dealt with by the Fire Service as part of our agreement to operate. The detail on the fire type is obtained through the situation reports (sit rep) received by the fire fighters that attend the call.

Date	Address	Fire Type
10-5-12	25b Mavora Pl, Heidelberg, Invercargill City	Tree on fire
11-5-12	624 North Rd, Lorneville, Invercargill City	Hedge fire
23-5-12	104 Mararoa Rd, The Key, Southland District	Fire on hillside
2-6-12	Daffodil Bay Rd, Sandy Point, Invercargill City	Bonfire
2-6-12	793 SH 1 Dacre, Southland District	Fire in paddock
12-7-12	744 Papatotara Coast Rd, Rowallan, Southland District	Bush fire
15-7-12	Memorial Dr, Wyndham, Southland District	Hay on fire at Wyndham Racecourse
22-7-12	129 Boundary Rd, Motu Rimu, Invercargill City	Fire in macracarpa hedge
27-7-12	101 Tramway Rd, Mabel Bush, Southland District	Fire in macracarpa hedge
28-7-12	22 Retreat Rd, Waihopai, Invercargill City	Large pile of green waste
28-7-12	91 Venus St, Georgetown, Invercargill City	
31-7-12	Main Wendonside Rd, Wendonside, Southland District	Tree on fire caused by power line down
31-7-12	Stewart Island Southland District	vegetation fire caused by rubbish pile

Feedback

We would love your feed back and input to the next newsletter. If you would like to forward ideas for topics or even write an article yourself feel free to forward to sally.chesterfield@southernruralfire.org.nz and we will endeavour to get it in the hotspot.

Notices

The third and final evening talk to be hold on the 20th August has been cancelled due to lack of interest. We will look at running a series of evening talks next winter from a more central location.

Fire Fighters Awards Night 26th September 5pm-8pm. Come along and have a drink and a laugh!

This year's Borland events will be held 20-22 November 2012 at Borland Lodge for Crew Leaders and above. If you hold these positions please put these dates in your diary. Planning is already underway!

